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Development of the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L)

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Development of the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L)

by

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Dedicated to:

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and

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Development of the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L)

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This study supports the development of the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L). Previous research has shown that people believe that it is important to close the achievement gaps that exist between racial/ethnic minorities and Whites (Rose & Gallup, 2004). Despite the fact that the general public has taken an interest in this area, there are currently no instruments for measuring how people reason about these issues. Consequently, there is little knowledge as to why people continue to support policies that have been unsuccessful in bringing racial/ethnic minority academic performance up to the level of Whites. This study takes steps in that direction by providing educators and school reform advocates with a useful instrument for understanding how people reason about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap.

The ASO-L measures the extent to which people believe in two different explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap. I have termed the explanation that I believe is most pervasive in US society "culture-blaming." It is consistent with the dominant racial story about Latino underachievement, which focuses primarily on the presumed limitations of Latino families and Latino culture. I refer to what I believe to be the second most common explanation as "structure-blaming." It challenges the dominant

racial story because it places blame on schools and the schooling system rather than the limitations of Latinos.

Confirmatory factor analyses provide evidence for the factorial validity of the ASO-L. In addition, structural equation modeling performed on sample data indicates that the two primary explanations—culture-blaming and structure-blaming—are meaningfully related to attitudes towards resource redistribution, English-only initiatives, parent education, and standardized testing above and beyond what can be accounted for by measures of attributional complexity (G. Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986) and political orientation (Kerlinger, 1984). Finally, a comparison of latent means revealed that Latinos are more likely than Whites to endorse structure-blaming attributions, but no less likely to endorse culture-blaming attributions. Recommendations for further research and academic activism are included.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess popular thinking about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap. Concerned scholars, educators, parents, and students have given this issue much thought, and several interventions have been implemented in the name of "closing the gap." Even with all of this attention, a considerable amount of work remains to be done to bring Latino academic performance up to the level at which Whites achieve. Given that educational reform is best implemented when it has public endorsement (Hess, 2006), a critical first step involves acquiring a thorough understanding of the thought processes that people employ when assigning causes for the differential achievement of Latino and White students.

My study demonstrates the validity of the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L) for measuring popular explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap. This study also shows how scores from this instrument can be used to predict attitudes towards several different school reform initiatives. By identifying the primary explanation types, and by better understanding how they relate to attitudes towards school reform policies, we can begin to see what motivates people to prefer certain types of educational policy over others. It will then be up to policymakers to use this information to convince the general public of the need to replace policies that perpetuate the gap with ones that close it.

Evidence of "The Gap"

Latino students as a group do not do as well as their White counterparts according to most traditional measures of academic achievement (Campbell, Hombo, & Mazzeo,

2000; Carpenter, A. Ramirez, & Severn, 2006). On the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), approximately one-third of Latino fourth graders scored "below basic" in math and over half scored "below basic" in science. The numbers for Whites were 11 percent and 18 percent respectively (Perie, Grigg, & Dion, 2005; USDOE, 2006a). The statistics are even more discouraging in the older grades. On the 2000 NAEP, 56 percent of Latino twelfth graders scored "below basic" in math and 70 percent scored "below basic" in science. The corresponding figures for Whites were 26 percent and 41 percent respectively (Braswell, Lutkus, Grigg, Santapau, Tay-Lim, & M. Johnson, 2000; O'Sullivan, Lauko, Grigg, Qian, Zhang, Isham, Lim, Thind, & Worthington, 2000). This trend is present in the verbal areas as well. On the 2002 NAEP, 56 percent of Latino fourth graders scored "below basic" on the writing portion as compared to only 25 percent of White fourth graders. At the twelfth grade level, 38 percent of Latinos scored "below basic" while only 21 percent of White test takers scored that low (NCES, 2003). Parallel discrepancies between Latino and White students have been found in every previous administration of the NAEP dating back over 30 years (Llagas, 2003; Valencia, 2002).

State mandated tests tell the same story. In states as geographically diverse as Texas (Valencia, 2000), Massachusetts (Brennan, Kim, Wenz-Gross, & Siperstein, 2001), Illinois (Allensworth, 2004) and Colorado (Escamilla, Mahon, Riley-Bernal, & Rutledge, 2003), Latinos are overrepresented among those who fail to achieve the cut-off score for promotion. This means that the already glaring gap in grade retention (13% for Latinos

and 9% for Whites, Llagas, 2003) is likely to stabilize or widen as the era of No Child Left Behind unfolds (Bernal & Valencia, 2000).

The synergy of grade retention and failure on high-stakes tests exacerbates already inflated Latino dropout rates nationwide (Losen, 2004; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Valencia, Villarreal, & Salinas, 2002). According to the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), only 86.4 percent of Latinos who were in eighth grade in 1988 had received their high school diploma or equivalent credential by 2000 as compared with 93.2 percent of White students in the same cohort (Swail, Cabrera, & C. Lee, 2004). Other estimates of the Latino dropout rate are even higher, ranging from about 22 percent (Fry, 2003) to around 24 percent (USDOE, 2006b) depending on how researchers operationalized the terms "Latino" and "dropout."

Differences exist in the top tiers of students as well. Latinos who apply for college typically have poorer grades (D'Souza, 1995), have taken fewer advanced placement (AP) courses (Pachon & de la Garza, 1996), and have worse entrance exam scores than White applicants (Noble, 2003). On the 2005 administration of the SAT, Latinos scored an average of 69 (out of a possible 800) points lower than Whites on the verbal portion and 67 (out of a possible 800) points lower in math (USDOE, 2006a). Composite ACT scores show a similar trend with White test takers scoring an average of two (out of a possible 36) points higher than Latinos (Noble, 2003).

These discrepancies translate to under-representation at the post-secondary level. Although one quarter of the US population has earned at least a bachelor's degree, only 10 percent of Latinos have achieved that level of education (S. Brown, Santiago & E.

Lopez, 2003). The same is true at the highest levels of schooling where Latinos account for only five percent of the student body at doctoral degree granting research universities. White students make up approximately two-thirds of the student bodies at those same institutions (Snyder & Hoffman, 2002). At the end of the pipeline, Latinos earned only 2.9 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded in 2000 even though they represented 12.5 percent of the national population at that time (R. Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003; USDOE, 2006b).

The Socio-Educational Context of "The Gap"

Putting all of these statistics together, it is clear why the difference in scholastic performance between Latinos and Whites has been referred to as an "achievement gap." This "gap" has captivated educators, scholars, and policymakers and has sparked heated debate over whether differences in achievement can be eliminated through programmatic interventions and, if so, how best to implement and finance the required changes.

Because the debate has been highly publicized, it has had an effect on how the general population interprets the problem (Bracey, 1995; 1997). The opinions of educators and policymakers have appeared in books, newspaper articles, and television programs, and popular thought has been influenced by what these "experts" have had to say (Kohn, 2002). The full impact of the dialogue surrounding the Latino-White achievement gap therefore reaches beyond the short-term effects of whichever school reform initiatives come to fruition to shape the American imagination about what is and what can be for Latino students.

Official explanations for "the gap"

The "official" reasons for what makes some students more academically successful than others have evolved over time. In the mid-1960s, the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* study (more commonly known as the "Coleman Report") found that family and neighborhood factors are more influential than school environment in determining academic performance (Coleman, 1966). Around the same time, Catherine Chilman (1966) invoked the "culture of poverty" argument made famous by Oscar Lewis (1959) to explain the low academic performance of the poor. She concluded that bad parenting, maladaptive cultural practices, and experiential deprivation combine to create a home environment that interferes with the development of academic skills and knowledge. Large-scale efforts at socializing the poor away from their dysfunctional cultures were deemed necessary to improve their overall school performance.

In the early 1980s, *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) made headlines by declaring that the public schools were in such bad shape that if a foreign country had designed them for us we might consider it an act of war. Emphasis was placed on moving the curriculum back to the "basics" (i.e., math and science), increasing the homework load for students, improving textbooks, and relying more heavily on standardized tests. *A Nation at Risk* thus broke from the trend set by its predecessors by indicting the educational system as a whole rather than locating the cause for academic inadequacy within a particular social class (Harris & Herrington, 2006).

Currently, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; Public law 107-110) is the official educational policy in America. At the student level, NCLB requires that students

demonstrate competence on standardized exams before they can pass to the next grade. Schools that serve a disproportionately high percentage of students who fail these tests must show significant progress over a three-year span or be forced to make tutoring and other services available to their low-income students (Burch, Steinberg, & Donovan, 2007). If they still do not show marked improvement by the end of the fourth year, they may be subjected to staff shuffling, curriculum reform, or restructuring (Bracey, 2003; Hess & Finn, 2004; E. Smith, 2005). What the act does not require, however, is that states distribute resources evenly to ensure that all schools have the necessary means by which to educate students properly. Ultimately then, the task of meeting the goals outlined by NCLB falls on students, schools, and school districts because the macro-level structural features of the schooling system (e.g., resource distribution) have not been targeted for change (J. Lee & Wong, 2004; Schrag, 2004; Tucker & Toch, 2004).

The common message that has been sent by *Growing up Poor*, the Coleman Report, *A Nation at Risk*, and NCLB is that the public schools simply are not getting the job done. Yet, despite the serious tone expressed in each these documents, the issue of unequal distribution of resources among schools has yet to be adequately addressed. The public has been led to believe in different ways at different times that deviant students, teachers, schools, and/or cultures are to blame (Bracey, 1995).

Popular beliefs about "the gap"

While the relative merits of each of these education reform models have been debated thoroughly, little attention has been paid to the ways in which failure has been structured into the schooling system through uneven allotment of resources, under-

representation of racial/ethnic minority teachers, and a lack of culturally relevant curriculum. It is presently unknown what effect the systematic exclusion of these sorts of structural causes from scholarly and political discourse has had on the public's understanding of these issues.

Alfie Kohn (2002) has argued that both the alarmist reactions to the alleged falloff in the quality of public schooling and the failure to address unequal allocation of resources can be attributed to the fact that conservative interests are plotting to weaken the public's trust in the schooling system in preparation for a full-scale corporate takeover. So far, however, the impact of this "manufactured crisis" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) has been less damaging than skeptics have imagined. In a recent poll jointly conducted by *Phi Delta Kappan* and Gallup (Rose & Gallup, 2004), a majority of respondents gave the nation's public schools a "C" in overall quality. While a "C" is a far cry from a ringing endorsement, respondents did give higher scores to schools in their own community (47% "A" or "B"), and higher scores yet to the school their oldest child attends (70% "A" or "B"). This apparent discrepancy suggests that although people may be affected by the messages they receive about public schools, their personal experiences with their own children's schools triumph over the negative images and symbols.

The Rose and Gallup (2004) poll also showed that even though Americans do not appear to be overly concerned about the quality of the public schools on the whole, they do regard the achievement gap between Whites and minorities as a "very important" issue. When asked to explain the likely causes for the differential performance of students by race/ethnicity, a majority placed the greatest share of responsibility on parents.

However, in addition to wanting better parenting, an overwhelming majority of respondents also were in favor of providing additional instructional time for low-performing students, strengthening remedial programs, providing state-funded preschool programs, and creating in-school health clinics (Rose & Gallup, 2004). These results indicate that the American public would like to see a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to school reform that focuses on familial, cultural, school-level, and structural modifications.

Beyond Rose and Gallup's (2004) finding that Americans generally believe that the achievement gap between racial subgroups is a significant problem, little is known about the ways in which Americans conceptualize how student failure intersects with race and social class. Furthermore, there has been very little research into how the attributions that arise from these understandings relate to preferences for school reform policies. The present study adds information about popular explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap and shows how these explanations influence policy preferences.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

In establishing the theoretical framework for the study, I draw on principles derived from social psychology, sociology, education, and law to show how popular explanations for social phenomena acquire large-scale acceptance. I also explain how people who wield economic and political power use their influence to shape popular opinion and why the general public is so amenable to having their imaginations molded in particular ways.

To elucidate these points, I rely on social attribution theory (Heider, 1958) to describe how people expend cognitive resources in the causal reasoning process. I then draw on the work of political sociologists to argue that people readily accept dominant ideologies because doing so reduces the amount of thinking required to reason about complex social issues (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Next, I draw on critical race theory to assert that the on-going legacy of racism both creates and rationalizes a race-based hierarchy in the US (Delgado, 2001). Finally, I apply racial ideology theory (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b) to explain why the general public has such an easy time accepting negative images of Latino students.

I contend, based on these theories, that there are two principal explanations that underlie people's reasoning about the Latino-White achievement gap. The first blames Latino families and culture for the gap. It portrays Latinos as responsible for their own academic misfortunes and ignores how racism and classism influence schooling outcomes. The second blames schools and the schooling system. From this latter perspective, Latino students do worse academically because of a social hierarchy that keeps them from competing on a level playing field in school.

These two factors comprise the underlying dimensions measured by the Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (ASO-L). As this study demonstrates, the ASO-L can also be used to predict attitudes towards several school reform initiatives designed to promote Latinos success above and beyond what is already accounted for by existing measures of attributional complexity (G. Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986) and political orientation (Kerlinger, 1984). As

such, the ASO-L represents an important instrument for understanding both the ways in which people think about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap and what they see as the most viable solutions to the problem.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

I will first place the study within the theoretical framework of social attribution theory to explain why people feel compelled to find causes for events that occur in their social world. I will then apply dominant ideology theory to explain how particular explanations acquire widespread acceptance. Finally, I will bring in critical race theory and racial ideology theory to describe the motivational aspects behind popular explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap.

Social Attribution Theory

The precedent for systematically measuring causal reasoning in psychology has been established by the voluminous research on social attributions (Hewstone, 1989). According to Kelley (1967), people are driven to explain events that occur in their world in order to gain a sense of mastery and control over their environment. These explanations are termed "social attributions."

Prior knowledge and beliefs about causal relationships inform this process. If *x* is thought to have reliably caused *y* in the past, then it is likely that *x* will cause *y* again in the future (Kelley, 1973). Consider the following example. Imagine that the last two times you drove in the rain you experienced hydroplaning. As a result of the intense fear of losing control and being involved in an accident, you developed an association in your mind between wet conditions and risk to self and others. This causal attribution—rain makes driving more hazardous—would be adaptive because it would increase the

likelihood that you would take extra precautions the next time it rains to prevent an accident.

Social psychologists believe that people rely on this type of cause-and-effect understanding of the world when deciding between internal and external attributions for a specific event or behavior. Within this scheme, internal attributions typically refer to causes that have to do with the traits, dispositions, ability, or will of a specific person (i.e., "actor"). External attributions cite situational influences, such as circumstances, social expectations, and access to relevant information. Although these two attribution types (i.e., internal and external) have ordinarily been treated as "hydraulic," meaning that the strength of one type is inversely related to the strength of the other (M. Ross & G. Fletcher, 1985), research has shown that people are capable of attributing behavior to a combination of internal and external causes at the same time (G. Fletcher, et al., 1986).

Flaws in the causal reasoning process

Attributional biases

A core principle of attribution theory is that people tend to be "cognitive misers" who rely on cognitive shortcuts, called "heuristics," to expedite the causal reasoning process (Hansen, 1980; S. Taylor, 1981). While these shortcuts help reduce the cognitive effort required to reason about complex social phenomena, they also lead to predictable errors, called "attributional biases" (Kruglanski, Baldwin, & Towson, 1983). One such bias concerns the discrepancy between an actor's attributions about a negative event to external causes and an observer's attribution for the same event to internal causes. This bias has been referred to as the "actor-observer effect" (E. Jones & Nisbett, 1972).

A similar bias is the "self-serving" or "hedonic" bias, which refers to the propensity of actors to see bad events as resulting from external circumstances and good events as resulting from their own volition (Larson, 1977; M. Ross & Sicoly, 1979). The function of this bias is to protect one's self-image by taking credit when good things happen and shunning responsibility when bad things happen.

The self-serving bias contrasts with the tendency for observers of an actor's bad outcome to discount powerful external forces, instead overattributing the event to characteristics of the actor (L. Ross, 1977; L. Ross & Nisbett, 1991). L. Ross, Amabile, and Steinmetz (1977) demonstrated this bias, commonly referred to as the "fundamental attribution error," by having participants watch a mock game show in which a host was asked to make up trivia questions for a contestant. At the conclusion of the game, participants were asked whether the host or the contestant was smarter. Most participants chose the host even though they were fully aware of how the game was structured.

The fundamental attribution error has been called the most robust attributional bias because it has been observed in many different situations and is assumed to affect almost everyone (Truchot, Maure, & Patte, 2003). In investigating this claim, Joan Miller (1984) was able to show that the tendency to overattribute causes for social phenomena to internal characteristics was actually more profound in Western cultures than in Eastern cultures (e.g., India). She posited that these differences were due to an emphasis on individualism in Western societies as compared with an emphasis on contextual factors in Eastern societies.

The just-world belief

Another bias that influences attributional processing is the belief in a "just world" (Lerner, 1980). People who believe in a just world think that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. The reverse is also assumed to be true: people for whom good things happen must be good and people for whom bad things happen must be bad. Adopting this simplistic version of reality has the dual advantage of reducing cognitive effort and providing a sense of cognitive mastery.

In addition to facilitating the causal reasoning process, the just-world outlook has implications for helping behavior. Bierhoff (2002) found that people who strongly endorse the just-world belief are likely to help others whom they perceive to be suffering through no fault of their own. In those cases, helping is considered to be a way of righting a wrong and restoring the equilibrium of the universe. Conversely, people who are seen as responsible for their fate are deemed to be unworthy of help.

Additional research has shown that people who strongly endorse the belief in a just world also factor in the cost of the help, the perceived effectiveness of the help, and how complex of a solution is required when deciding whether or not to lend a helping hand (D. Miller, 1977). When the cost of helping is thought to exceed the deservingness of the person in need, when the effects would be minimal or temporary, or when a complicated intervention is required, helping is not likely to occur. Bierhoff (2002) believes that this may be because a failure to see appreciable gains represents a threat to the observer's basic belief that the world is a just place. So instead of lending a helping hand, people protect their beliefs by reframing the "good people experience good

outcomes" interpretation to the more achievable "bad people experience bad outcomes" perspective by advancing internal attributions for the victim's plight.

Implications for attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap

These social psychological principles expose some of the limitations associated with how people arrive at casual explanations for their own and other people's behavior. They also shed light on what might be expected when people are asked about causes for the Latino-White achievement gap. People who are unmotivated to think of complex reasons for the differential performance of Latino and White students are likely to settle upon internal attributions that place undue emphasis on internal characteristics of Latino students because doing so is easy and consistent with our Western emphasis on internal causation. They would also tend to see Latino students as bad people because, according to the just-world belief, only bad people experience unfortunate outcomes.

While these social psychological principles explain some of the biases that might affect people's reasoning about the Latino-White achievement gap, they do not go far enough because they do not explain why these particular biases are so prevalent. The next section focuses on the notion of dominant ideologies as a partial response to this query.

Dominant Ideology Theory

The most pervasive belief systems in US society are termed "dominant ideologies" and include individualism, meritocracy, and open opportunity (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Individualism emphasizes personal goals over collective goals (Triandis, 1989) and human control over the natural and social environments (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Contextual factors, whether proximal (e.g., immediate circumstances) or

distal (e.g., institutional discrimination), are seen as relatively unimportant as compared with free will and personal choice. This view meshes well with a belief in meritocracy which puts faith in institutions to reward people based on the credentials they bring to bear. All of this is thought to take place within a social structure that allows everyone regardless of race an equal chance of experiencing success.

Dominant ideologies exert a powerful influence on causal reasoning because they represent the basic assumptions people hold about the nature of the social world. As Huber and Form (1973) put it, a dominant ideology is "the sum and substance of what every child has learned about the way the American system works. It is what everybody *knows* (original emphasis; p. 3.)." Collectively, they form the basic building blocks from which subsequent explanations are constructed.

Motivational reasons for employing the dominant ideologies

Dominant ideologies are not deterministic, but they do set soft parameters on the range of possible explanations that people are likely to give for a social issue such as the Latino-White achievement gap (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). There are several reasons why this is so. Like cognitive heuristics, dominant ideologies are easy, so it takes considerably less effort to think ideologically (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). There are also social costs associated with publicly opposing dominant ideologies. For example, Michael Apple (2000; 2001) has pointed out that in the context of education, proposals to change school policy, pedagogy, or curriculum to reflect liberal ideals are often met with hand wringing about what might happen if schoolchildren are exposed to "anti-American" ideals. Educational initiatives driven by dominant ideologies escape this sort of criticism

because they are passed off as being value-free (Giroux, 1988). Gramsci (1994) and Bourdieu (1996) have argued that this form of hegemonic dominance allows institutions to govern the attributional domain such that the only explanations that "make sense" are those that are in agreement with dominant ideologies.

There are also identity-related motivations for adhering to dominant ideologies. According to Bernier and Williams (1973), ideology strengthens group ties and sets recognizable boundaries for determining who is and who is not a member of particular social group. In the US, any opposition to "individualism" and "personal responsibility" is seen as contrary to the national spirit.

The dominant ideologies also have implications for group self-esteem. People who occupy positions of power and authority are much more inclined to follow ideologies that explain their favored status in laudatory ways (Federico & Levin, 2004). The dominant ideologies in this country portray the "successful" as hard-workers (meritocracy) who have gotten what they deserve through individual effort (individualism) in a social structure that treats everyone the same (open opportunity). For well-to-do people, endorsing dominant ideologies means glorifying their own social position (B. Lee, D. Lewis, & S. Jones, 1992).

Dominant ideologies and policy preferences

Much of the research on the relationships between adherence to dominant ideologies and policy attitudes has focused on beliefs about social stratification (e.g., Feagin, 1975; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; Kluegel & Bobo, 1993; K. Smith and Stone, 1989). Researchers in this area have traditionally used a framework similar to the one

used in social psychology to categorize the explanations people give for why some people are wealthy and others are poor. Explanations that pin responsibility on individual people are referred to as "individualistic" attributions. Those that cite sociological causes are called "structural" attributions. As is the case with social attributions, research has shown that people often make both individualistic and structural attributions when explaining the cause of a social issue (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986).

Dominant ideology theory makes several predictions about who is likely to favor each attribution type (Shelton & G. Wilson, 2006). Since individualistic attributions are consistent with US dominant ideologies, most Americans are expected to favor individualistic attributions over structural ones. People in dominant positions in society are even more likely to prefer individualistic attributions because they stand to benefit from causal explanations that make their accomplishments appear to be the result of hard work and merit (Feagin, 1972; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986).

The theory also predicts that there will be a relationship between attributions for a particular social problem and attitudes towards social policies aimed at resolving it. People who prefer structural explanations are expected to embrace policies aimed at changing the social structure whereas people who prefer individualistic explanations are expected to favor policies that focus on personal responsibility and taking advantage of opportunity (Apostle, Glock, Piazza, & Suelzle, 1983; Huber & Form, 1983; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1985). However, the available research suggests that these relationships are not nearly as straightforward as originally thought. Studies have shown that when asked about the causes for poverty, people who

prefer structural explanations are more likely than people who prefer individualistic explanations to support social policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunity (Apostle, Glock, Piazza, & Suelzle, 1983; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; B. Lee, D. Jones, & S. Lewis, 1990), but no more likely than "individualists" to favor group-based reform, such as quotas and affirmative action (Kluegel, 1990; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; Tuch & M. Hughes, 1996).

A study conducted by Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan (1985) elaborates on this apparent inconsistency. By distinguishing between attitudes towards egalitarianism in principle and practice, they found that Whites were more likely to say that they believed in racial equality in the abstract (e.g., "Black children should have the right to attend the same schools as White children) than they were to support the implementation of specific polices aimed at making that vision a reality (e.g., busing). According to Bobo & Kluegel (1997) and Jackman (1996), this "policy-implementation gap" occurs because group interests and negative feelings about racial/ethnic minorities are weighted more heavily than the merit of the policies themselves.

Subsequent research supports this interpretation. Bobo and Kluegel (1993) found that framing social policies in terms of helping the poor resulted in more favorable attitudes among Whites than framing the same policies in terms of helping Blacks. The anti-Black effect was even more pronounced when the intended outcome was to equalize incomes between the races (see also Fox, 2004). It appears as though negative feelings about racial outgroups diminishes the willingness of White people to support policies

aimed at closing the income gap, even among those who recognize that racial discrimination still exists.

In addition to racial antipathy, group interests have been shown to factor into people's decision of whether or not to support a particular social policy (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993). Kinder and Sanders (1996) analysis of National Election Study (NES) data indicated that people who were most likely to be affected by race-based policies aimed at narrowing the income gap, such as people working at a company that could be subjected to affirmative action laws, were no more likely to oppose race-based policies than were people who thought that they would be less directly affected. On the other hand, people who believed that Blacks threaten the collective interests of Whites were more likely to oppose race-based policies than people who did not take racial group interests into account.

Bobo and Kluegel's (1993) examination of 1990 General Social Survey data revealed a similar pattern. Whites' attitudes towards a group-based social policy (e.g., affirmative action) were influenced more strongly by group interests than by attributions for stratification or negative feelings about Black people. Bobo and Kluegel interpret their findings to suggest that the principle-implementation gap is caused by the perceived threat of policies geared towards ensuring equal outcomes. In other words, although stereotyping and racial antipathy still exist, White people are mainly concerned with protecting their preferred position in the racial hierarchy. To the extent that stereotypes help achieve that goal, they are employed.

Measurement issues

Although scholars have not developed any instruments for measuring explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap, previous research on explanations for wealth and poverty can inform the creation of such an instrument. One of the more important lessons learned from previous research is that more work needs to be done in conceptualizing the explanatory types (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1981). Individualism and structuralism have received the most attention from dominant ideology theorists, but with the exception of Kluegel and Bobo's (1993) study of NES data, there have been few attempts at evaluating the psychometric properties of the instruments used to measure these constructs (see Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; K. Smith & Stone, 1986). This has hindered the study of structural attributions in particular because the items comprising structural scales appear to be only weakly related to one another (Kluegel & Bobo, 1993). A more thorough conceptualization of the structural construct is required in order to more accurately measure the extent to which people explain social issues in terms of structural causes.

Another issue affecting earlier research concerns whether the attributional target's social group memberships are explicitly specified. Research has shown that people react differently when they are asked to make attributions for outcomes experienced by a particular group (e.g., women or Blacks) than when they are asked to make attributions for a general social issue without reference to a specific group (Cozzarelli, Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2002; Howard & Pike, 1986; Iyenger, 1991; Seccombe, James, Walters, 1998). Oftentimes, these differences can be traced back to stereotypes they hold about the

group in question. For example, in a study looking at the causes for poverty, Cozzarelli, Tagler, and Wilkinson (2002) found that people believe that women are poor due to bad reproductive choices and an inability to establish a traditional family whereas men are poor because they lack the motivation to work. Although both men and women were held responsible for their own socioeconomic fate, the perceived reasons for their predicament differed based on gender stereotypes.

Howard and Pike (1986) found a similar stereotype-attribution link in a clever study involving two separate experiments. Participants assigned to the first experiment were asked to explain the cause of an actor's unemployment. They were also told that the actor was either Black or White and of either high or low social class. Those in the second experiment were presented with a vignette about a man being arrested. They were also told of the actor's race and social class. Results indicated that the class of the actor was more important than the actor's race in the unemployment condition whereas the reverse was true in the arrest condition. Apparently, race-violence and class-ambition associations affected participants' assessment of internal/external causality more than race-ambition and class-violence associations did.

Additional evidence of the need to specify social group membership comes from a study conducted by Shanto Iyengar (1991). Participants read news reports that framed poverty in terms of specific cases (i.e., episodic framing) or broad themes (i.e., thematic framing). Those in the episodic framing condition tended to place responsibility for poverty on individuals whereas those in the thematic framing condition placed blame on society. When the attributional target was identified as Black, however, participants in

both conditions tended to favor individual-blaming attributions. Similar trends were observed when the attributional stimulus involved other stereotype-consistent images such as unemployment and illegal drug use. These results seem to suggest that negative beliefs about Blacks can override framing effects on Whites' attributional reasoning.

Explanation for the stereotype-attribution link

Because research has shown that the more salient a feature is the more heavily it will be weighted in the causal reasoning process (Lassiter, Geers, Munhall, Ploutz-Snyder, & Breitenbecher, 2002), a good instrument that specifies group membership will need to be careful in how the group is presented. The salience of a feature depends partly on what the observer is primed to see. When observers are led to believe that a specific trait covaries with an outcome, research indicates that the trait's salience will increase. Unless the observer consciously corrects for this effect, the trait will have an undue bearing on attributions for the observed stimulus (Devine, 1989; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005).

In the US, race, as judged by phenotypic characteristics, is salient in interracial encounters (Haney-López, 1994; Helms, 1995). Within this context, racial stereotypes, which speed up the cognitive process by allowing information about a group to substitute for information about each individual, are often automatically activated (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994). Because stereotypes exaggerate the covariance between racial group membership and proclivity for stereotyped behaviors, attention is diverted away from situational constraints (Allport, 1954; Berg, 2002; Schaller & O'Brien, 1992).

Duncan's (1976) study of intergroup perception provides a clear example of how stereotype-driven attributional biases work. White participants saw a video clip of either a White man or a Black man shoving another person. They were then asked whether the shove was caused by internal characteristics of the actor (i.e., the one doing the shoving) or external circumstances. Consistent with the stereotype-attribution hypothesis, participants made more internal attributions when the actor was Black than when he was White.

Although stereotypes such as "Black men are violent" are often thought to be limited to the faulty thinking of a few bad individuals, it may be more accurate to think of the creation and perpetuation of popular stereotypes as a societal phenomenon that occurs in the context of racial group competition (Mindiola, Niemann, & N. Rodriguez, 2002). Social identity theorists have argued that people seek to achieve relative advantage rather than absolute advantage in intergroup situations (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). In their classic "minimal groups" study, Turner, R. Brown, and Tajfel (1979) found that people will award more resources to their own group than competing groups when group membership is defined by nothing more than experimental assignment. What's more, they will seek to differentiate the total rewards between their own and an out-group even when doing so does not result in an overall net increase for their own group. Their results suggest that when all is settled, the overall goal is to be better *than*, not better *off*.

Stereotypes provide a convenient means by which groups legitimize this sort of in-group favoring behavior (Allport, 1985; Berg, 2002). In the now classic Robbers' Cave experiment, Sherif et al. (1961) witnessed otherwise happy and well-behaved

children turn nasty once they began competing with a rival group for status and rewards. In the heat of competition, the children invented an array of negative traits that they believed characterized all members of the rival group. According to Sherif, the children did this in an attempt to dehumanize their enemy and rationalize their own group's hostile behavior.

Implications for attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap

Dominant ideology theory suggests that people will choose to explain complicated social issues such as the Latino-White achievement gap in ways that are cognitively facile and socially prescribed, especially when doing so promotes their own group interests (Kluegel & Bobo, 1993; Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Therefore, we would expect that when asked about causes for the Latino-White achievement gap, people would generally prefer internal attributions. We would also expect that Whites would be more likely than Latinos to prefer internal attributions because they stand to benefit from explanations that portray their dominant status as deserved.

Additionally, researchers have found a link between attributions for a given social issue and attitudes towards what should be done about it (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1985). When asked to explain think about social stratification, people who believe that the main causes lie within the person see no reason why the social structure should be changed whereas people who believe that group-based discrimination still exists tend to favor policies that ensure equal opportunity (Tuch & M. Hughes, 1996). We would expect a similar relationship to exist between attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap and attitudes towards school reform policies aimed at closing it.

Capturing these relationships requires the development of an instrument capable of measuring preferences for different explanatory types. Previous research on attributions for social stratification provides a starting point for what such an instrument might look like, but several issues must be taken into consideration when using these studies as a template. Most importantly, an instrument for measuring explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap must reflect the dimensions underlying thinking about the differential performance of Latinos and Whites in the schools rather than the dimensions underlying thinking about social stratification. Furthermore, research has shown that specifying the race or ethnicity of the attributional target can affect causal reasoning, particularly when common stereotypes can be invoked to justify in-group favoring behavior (Fox, 2004; Iyenger, 1991). An instrument aiming to measure explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap would therefore need to account for the effects of stereotyping.

In the next section, I draw on critical race theory to more fully explicate how racism and group interest factor into stereotyping and, in turn, the attribution process. It is through an appreciation of the context of racial competition that the form and function a dominant racial ideology becomes apparent. This racial ideology, with its emphasis on the cultural shortcomings of Latinos, forms the theoretical foundation for the culture-blaming construct.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory provides a framework for understanding race relations in the US (Delgado, 2001). While a complete review of critical race theory is outside the scope

of this study, two of its core principles are germane to an understanding of the socio-political context of explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap. First, critical race theory conceives of prejudice as a justification for inter-group competition that plays out at the sociological level between racial/ethnic groups (Ladson-Billings, 1999). In defending this argument, critical race theorists have cited several specific examples of how White Americans have used the race construct, along with economic, social, and political might, to maintain their superior position in the racial hierarchy (Calmore, 1992). Second, critical race theory emphasizes the normalcy of racism in the US (Delgado, 2001). Whereas racism is often thought of as the sum of the acts of a few bigoted individuals, critical race theory views racism as ingrained in the American imagination. By appealing to the dominant ideologies of individualism and meritocracy, powerful institutions such as schools and courts act out racist agendas without appearing as though they have any malicious intent whatsoever (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Once they have created social stratification, they explain the inferior position of racial/ethnic minorities in terms of the failure of these groups to live up to the dominant ideologies. These explanations are eventually accepted without question as essential features of racial/ethnic minorities (i.e., stereotypes).

Examples from the critical race literature illustrate how power and ideology work together to protect White interests. According to Derrick Bell (1992), a critical component of White dominance is control over the official explanations for racial discrepancies in wealth, privileges, and status. These explanations are not static, but change over time in response to the evolving social context. The most striking example of

this was the shift from biological to cultural explanations for racial differences in educational achievement and economic outcomes, which began in the early 1900s and was hastened by the conclusion of World War II. After US troops returned home, the White power elite found it difficult to simultaneously profess contempt for Nazi human rights violations while defending domestic segregation on the basis of race-based biological differences. They also recognized that the threat racial/ethnic minorities posed to the status quo through civil disobedience and aggressive litigation would probably grow if all non-Whites continued to be officially classified as second-class citizens (Bell, 2004). The solution was to grant token legislative victories, limit implementation, and shift the official explanation for racial differences from a biologically based theory of White supremacy to one that emphasized the cultural deficits of Latinos and Blacks (Bell, 1987).

Another example involves the way the school boards in the 1960s manipulated the official racial designation of Latinos from non-White to White so that they would be bused to Black schools (Alemán, 2006; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Prior to the federal mandate to integrate the schools, Latinos in Houston and other cities throughout the Southwest were considered to be non-White and forced to attend their own segregated schools. Once states were ordered to integrate, Latinos were redefined as White and bused to predominately Black schools. This arrangement satisfied the federal integration requirement while also ensuring that White students would continue to attend all-White schools. It also publicly reinforced the notion that Latinos and Whites share a common

race, thereby weakening the argument that placing Latinos in predominately Black schools was an intentional act of racism.

These examples illustrate cases in which Whites protected their interests through creative manipulation of the race construct (for other examples, see Haney-López, 1996). Although in both instances Whites successfully used power to defend their racial interests, they knew that selling the idea of fairness required framing law and institutional policy in a way that was appealing to the masses. Critical race theorists contend that modern institutions strategically apply "color-blindness" in accomplishing this task (Delgado, 1995). Because color-blind logic is consistent with the higher virtues of individualism and meritocracy, the general population is primed to accept "color-blind" policies as fair (Delgado, 1996; Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997). In fact, race-conscious policies that go further in ensuring equal outcomes tend to be the ones that end up being seen as discriminatory (against Whites) because they require that racial distinctions be made.

Racial Ideology Theory

Overview of the theory

Racial ideology theory builds upon critical race theory to more fully explain how deeply embedded the notion of color-blindness is in US popular thought and how a feigned belief in race neutrality underlies popular explanations for social issues (Lynn & L. Parker, 2006). According to racial ideology theorists, Whites in the US have used their power to make stereotypes and other erroneous beliefs about Latinos and other racial/ethnic minorities official explanations for the extant racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva,

2003b; Feagin, 2000; Lane, 1962; A. Lewis, 2001). One of the most powerful ways they have done this is by promoting racial stories that speak to the relative merits of each racial group. According to Bonilla-Silva (2003b):

> What makes these racial story lines 'ideological' is that storytellers and their audiences share a representational world that makes these stories seem factual (p. 76).

The racial ideology Bonilla-Silva speaks of is borne out of a need by those in power to protect their resources and to explain their privileged position in a way that is acceptable to the oppressed (Bobo, 2004; Jackman & Muha, 1984). As long as those at the bottom of the hierarchy see their lot in life as natural and justifiable, they will be less likely to challenge the dominant group for power.

The present day racial ideology is culture-blaming color-blindness, which refers to the belief that racial differences in socioeconomic status and educational achievement can be explained by the unwillingness of Latinos and other racial/ethnic minorities to embrace dominant ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). Whites use stories driven by the dominant racial ideology to openly assert that Latinos do worse than Whites, not because they lack the genetic code to compete, but because they lack the initiative to take advantage of economic and educational systems that give them ample opportunity to be upwardly mobile. They defend their stance by claiming that racism died a long time ago and that there have been decades of equal opportunity since then, an argument that obviously disregards the ways in which Latino opportunity is restricted today (A. Lewis, 2003).

The case of school finance law in Texas provides an example of how Whites are currently trying to use their political and economic might to restrict Latino educational access while relying on color-blindness to shield themselves from accusations of racism (Alemán, 2006). The term "Robin Hood" has been used to describe the state's current school finance policy, which was originally designed to redistribute property tax monies from wealthier school districts to poorer ones. The policy has come under heavy assault from taxpayers in several of the wealthiest districts in the state who argue that it is unfair for their money to go towards supporting children in the poorest districts (Benton, 2003). Not surprisingly, the wealthiest districts serve White students and the poorest districts serve Black and Latino students, so in essence it is Whites who are objecting to providing education dollars for the schools that Black and Latino children attend.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2003b), color-blindness is invoked in situations like this one to undercut Latino protestations of racism. In this case, Latino students are thought to be overrepresented in the lowest funded schools not because of their race/ethnicity per se, but because their parents are unwilling to work hard enough to afford a house in one of the wealthier school districts. Against this ideological background, bringing race and racism into the fold violates the code of color-blindness and makes the victimized look like the ones who are being racist.

The backlash against color consciousness can also be seen in the writings of scholars such as Dinesh D'Souza (1991) who has proposed that color-blind policies represent the only hope for dealing with the educational struggles of Latinos and other racial/ethnic minorities. From his perspective, ethnic studies departments and ethnic-

specific fraternities and sororities exacerbate the negative imaging of racial/ethnic minorities on college campuses. Adding to the problem is the stigma created by affirmative action programs that allegedly allow unqualified Black and Latino students to attend prestigious universities. The consequence, according to D'Souza, is that all Black and Latino students are looked upon as undeserving of admission regardless of whether or not they actually met the minimal criteria. His proposed solution is to break the cognitive association between dark skin and low aptitude by terminating race-conscious admissions policies, shutting down ethnic studies departments, and dissolving racial/ethnic student groups.

Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) argue that it is precisely this kind of racelessness that drives racist explanations for economic and academic stratification in modern times. The ability of Whites to assert color-blindness not only gives them a recognizable and socially desirable way of hiding their latent fears, apprehensions, and general distaste for Latinos and other racial ethnic minorities, it also provides a backdoor means by which to promote racial group interests (Forman, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Acknowledging that racial/ethnic minorities face more difficult obstacles en route to academic success while maintaining that the way to get ahead is to adopt mainstream White values protects the White person from being called a racist. What's more, the self-confidence gained through public approval frees the White person to oppose the very measures that are required to break down the institutions and systems that make the White and Latino opportunity and reward structures so very different (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). This form of oppression is doubly bad because it not only ensures that

Latinos will have a more difficult time achieving equally with Whites, but also invalidates counter-hegemonies that call attention to structural, race-based inequalities such as school funding disparities, distorted curricula, and uncaring teachers.

Implications for attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap

Both critical race theory and racial ideology theory contend that racism is not limited to individual acts committed by a few wrong-minded individuals (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; Delgado, 2001). Institutions such as schools and courts build racism into opportunity structure in a way that favors Whites. They defend their actions by appealing to color-blindness, a view that appears to be consistent with the dominant ideologies of individualism and meritocracy. Because people have been trained to accept the dominant ideologies as truth, they are primed to endorse ideologically-consistent color-blind laws and policies.

Attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap follow this trend. As mentioned previously, people are more willing to advance individual-blaming explanations than structure-blaming ones because the former is more consistent with dominant ideologies of individualism and meritocracy. Critical race theory and racial ideology theory explain that the preference for individual-blaming explanations often extends to group-blaming explanations in cases of racial inter-group competition. The ideology that rationalizes this shift is culture-blaming color-blindness, which provides a socially acceptable way of masking racial group interests with apparent adherence to allegedly race-neutral dominant ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b).

Summary

According to social attribution theory, people engage in causal reasoning out of a need to understand and master their social environment (Kelley, 1967). As a general rule, they do not invest the time and effort required to make sound judgments unless there is sufficient motivation to do so. Dominant ideologies exploit this tendency by providing ready-made explanations for complicated social issues (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986).

In addition to speeding up the thinking process, dominant ideologies also function to emphasize the deservingness of the haves over the have nots (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Popular stereotypes tend to be synchronous with these ideologies. Like the dominant ideologies, stereotypes make thinking more efficient because group information can substitute for knowledge about individual people within the group. Stereotypes are also practical because they can be used to justify in-group favoring behavior (Sherif et al, 1961).

The ascension of certain ideologies and stereotypes over others is not the result of a random process. As critical race theorists have explained, dominant ideologies provide system-justifying explanations for the oppression of racial/ethnic minorities (Bell, 1992). Racial ideology theory suggests that the general public accepts these explanations as official explanations for racial discrepancies because doing so provides a socially acceptable way of promoting group interests without the risk of being labeled a racist (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). They go on to state that the dominant racial ideology during any given era will be the one that does the best job of advancing the interests of the dominant group while also protecting individual members of that group from being

stigmatized (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). Today, that racial ideology is color-blind, cultural-deficit thinking, which asserts that social and academic stratification are the direct result of the cultural limitations of Latinos.

A Theoretical Defense of the Dimensionality of the ASO-L

The following sections outline two attribution types that are commonly expressed in scholarly writings about the Latino-White achievement gap. The purpose of the outline is to conceptualize these attribution types and to provide theoretical justification for the items that appear in the ASO-L. The first attribution type is referred to as "culture-blaming." Culture-blaming is used to refer to attributions that cite familial or cultural factors as the primary causes for the Latino-White gap. The second, "structure-blaming," implicates racism and classism in determining the opportunity and reward structures for White and Latino students.

Conceptualization of culture-blaming

Culture-blaming attributions focus on essential qualities thought to be shared by all or most Latinos (Biddle & Berliner, 2002). Chief among these is the belief that Latinos do not value education. This myth persists, despite the fact that generations of Latinos have fought valiantly to end racial discrimination in the schools (see Delgado-Bernal, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002), because it serves the needs of the dominant race. If the general public can be made to believe that Latinos are disinterested in education, then acts of academic racism, such as segregation, unequal distribution of resources, and classroom-level racial prejudice, seem less deplorable.

The belief that Latinos devalue education also rationalizes the dominant racial story about the Latino-White achievement gap, which portrays Latino parents as being so disinterested in formal education that they passively interfere with their children's academic progress. As the story goes, Latino parents do not put forth the necessary effort to generate cognitive stimulation in the home. Because their children are not exposed to the type of verbal and experiential stimuli that fosters cognitive growth, they are already behind their peers by the time they start kindergarten. To make matters worse, the children are pressured by their parents to maintain the values of the home rather than adapt to those of the school. Those who grow up speaking Spanish are further handicapped because they have to acquire English proficiency before they can even begin to learn course material. This is no easy task since their parents stubbornly refuse to speak English in the home, even though they are fully aware that it is the "official language" of the school. All of these factors work together to produce the disproportionate amount of academic problems Latino children experience. But rather than address the problems head on, Latino children and their parents shirk responsibility by attributing academic outcomes to "fate."

Given this storyline, it is clear that culture-blaming attributions focus on the presumed limitations of Latino parents and Latino culture rather than on school factors. While it is believed that individual teachers can intervene by exposing students to mainstream culture, limiting students' use of Spanish, and teaching Latino parents how to raise their children, in the end, it is up to each individual student to choose to assimilate into the dominant culture of the school.

Culture-blaming attributions are considered internal because they place responsibility for the achievement gap on "actors" rather than external forces like schools and society. As such, they are consistent with the dominant ideologies of meritocracy and individualism. This makes culture-blaming attributions attractive because, as is the case with causal reasoning in general, it is much easier to rely on ideological and attributional shortcuts than it is to search for more complex and controversial external causes. Furthermore, because blaming the student at the individual level and blaming the culture at the group level are both within the realm of internal causality, the shift from individual to group-level blaming only requires a belief that the traits in question are overrepresented in the target group (Yzerbyt & Rogier, 2001). The dominant racial ideology, replete with anti-education stereotypes about Latinos (Valencia & Black, 2002), provides what little rationale is needed to make that shift.

The etiology of these stereotypes is similar to what William Ryan (1971) has referred to as "blaming the victim." It starts with the identification of a "successful" (i.e., White) and an "unsuccessful" (i.e., Latino) group. The groups are then carefully scrutinized to identify any differences that demarcate group membership. Differential outcomes are attributed to the traits that the successful group has and the unsuccessful group does not or vice versa. After experts "find" these differences enough times, they become obvious explanations for why the more successful group outperforms the less successful group. Cultural values are then inferred from these traits implying that the groups are different because they want to be different. These differences in core values

then become the default explanation for why the same problems plague the unsuccessful group generation after generation (V. Allen, 1970).

The following sections provide an overview of several specific negative beliefs about Latinos that are used to explain the Latino-White achievement gap. These sections are intended to elaborate on the culture-blaming construct and to defend the conceptual basis for the items contained within the culture-blaming subscale of the ASO-L.

The cultural origins of academic apathy

At the core of the culture-blaming perspective is the belief that Latinos do not value education. Most people do not feel the need to justify their use of this stereotype because it is so deeply ingrained in the dominant racial ideology. There are those, however, who believe Latinos' alleged apathy towards education is a cultural artifact left over from their ancestral countries of origin. Stephen and Abigail Thernstrom (2003), for example, have argued that some immigrant groups arrive in this country with have a work ethic and set of values that prepare their children to be good students whereas others do not. The Thernstroms identify Asians as having a "good culture" that places a high emphasis on education and Latinos as having a "bad culture" that relegates education to a position of lesser value.

While this argument is consistent with popular stereotypes of Latinos, it does not paint an accurate picture of Latino academic performance because it fails to account for the fact that Latino immigrants outperform subsequent generations (Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Rumbaut, 1995). Valenzuela (1999) has explained that these differences are largely due to the fact that first generation immigrants enter the country with a starry eyed belief

in upward mobility which motivates them to make good on every educational opportunity. Their experiences contrast with those of second and third generation Latinos who live their entire lives in a society that, to them, seems bent on constantly reminding them of their second-class status. So while second and third generation Latinos believe in the value of education as much as recent immigrants do, they also know that the relationship between effort and reward is often moderated by racism. They are therefore hesitant to put maximum effort into a system that does not deliver equitable rewards (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001).

Lack of cognitive stimulation in the home

The belief that Latino homes lack cognitive stimulation also resonates with culture-blaming logic. While some believe that low levels of stimulation are a by-product of poverty, there is also an element of choice that is assumed to exist in terms of how parents structure their children's time. That is, the failure of Latino parents to engage their children in cognitively stimulating activities is believed to be an expression of apathy towards intellectual development rather than a natural response to environmental constraints. This point is underscored by the call for parent education classes to teach Latino parents how to create better home environments for their children.

In order for this attribution to make sense, two conditions must be met. First, there must be a positive relationship between level of cognitive stimulation in the home and academic performance. Second, Latinos must be shown to have less cognitively stimulating home environments than Whites. Researchers evaluating the first proposition have used a combination of criteria for assessing stimulation in the home, such as

resource availability (e.g., the number of children's books or stimulating objects in the home; Foy & Mann, 2003), parental sensitivity and responsivity (Hirose & Barnard, 1997), the amount and quality of conversation between adults and the child (Tabors, Snow, & Dickinson, 2001), and the amount and quality of joint activities that go on between parent and child (Saxon, 1997). On the whole, the available research has borne out the hypothesized relationship between level of stimulation and cognitive development (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, & Bradley, 2005).

The second proposition—that Latino homes are lacking in cognitive stimulation relative to White homes—is not as well supported. Sugland, Zaslow, J. Smith, & Brooks-Gunn (1995) have noted that the relationship between stimulation and IQ (the oft used proxy for academic aptitude) is weaker among Latinos than among Whites, perhaps because one or both of the variables are culturally biased. Furthermore, Schmitz (2005) found that the level of cognitive stimulation may actually be higher in homes that promote a strong ethnic identity. In his study of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans, Schmitz found a negative relationship between level of acculturation and stimulation in the home. If anything, the more Latino families approximated White middle-class behavioral patterns, the less likely they were to provide high levels of cognitive stimulation.

While the research does not lend unwavering support for the notion that Latino homes lack stimulation, there does appear to be a significant inverse relationship between family income and cognitive stimulation. But, yet again, the issue of causality arises. Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Liaw (1995) found that the amount of stimulation in the

home decreased as the number of stressful events in the family increased. Based on the results of their study, it appears as though the trials and tribulations of being poor have more to do with a lack of stimulation in the home than does a culture of poverty per se.

The "Matthew effect"

According to the culture-blaming perspective, the initial differences caused by bad home environments lead to bigger discrepancies over time because White students who have the basic knowledge required to master more advanced tasks move ahead at a faster pace than Latino students are able to catch up (see Bast & Reitsma, 1997; Scarborough & J. Parker, 2003). In the educational literature, this progressively increasing gap in performance between the originally advantaged and the originally disadvantaged is referred to as the "Matthew effect" (Stanovich, 1986; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). Research investigating whether this trend actually exists has produced mixed results. McNamara, Scissons, and Dahleu (2005) found that kindergartners identified as slow readers fall further behind their peers by first grade. Bradley, Caldwell, and Rock (1988) were able to demonstrate longer-term effects by showing that the quality of the home environment when children are six months old is predictive of how well they will perform academically when they are 11 years old. However, B. Shaywitz, Holford, Holahan, J. Fletcher, Stuebing, Francis, & S. Shaywitz (1995) found that differences in reading ability remain constant over time, and Aarnoutse, van Leeuwe, Voeten, & Oud (2000) found that absolute differences in word recognition and reading comprehension actually decrease over time.

Whereas the effects of initial differences are unclear, the assumption that Latino students start off behind their White peers is well supported. According to a recent study published by the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007), White children arrive in kindergarten as more proficient readers than Latinos. Contrary to the Matthew effect hypothesis, however, the study showed that racial/ethnic differences in reading become smaller by the time students reach the fifth grade.

While it seems evident that there are differences between Latino and White children in kindergarten, and it seems at least plausible that these differences can expand over the course of schooling, what has not been shown is that these differences are the direct consequence of bad parenting or apathy towards education. As numerous researchers have pointed out, several other variables, including teacher expectations, negative ability labeling, and stereotypes, confound evidence that early differences lead to bigger gaps in performance down the road (Burstall, 1979; Rist, 1970; Scarborough & J. Parker, 2003).

Furthermore, even if Latino children are not as academically prepared as their White counterparts when they enter kindergarten, some of the responsibility for Matthew effects can be placed on the schools because teachers have traditionally done a poor job of recognizing the abilities that Latino students bring with them from home. Luis Moll and his associates (N. Gonzalez, Moll, Floyd-Tennery, Rivera, Rendon, & Amanti, 1995) have shown that Latino families pass along specific abilities and ways of seeing the world that are functional in certain cultural contexts, but which are ordinarily not valued at school. Teachers who recognize and validate these "funds of knowledge" build upon

Latino students' culturally-informed abilities in much that same way they draw on White students' book knowledge (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2006). The Matthew effect can therefore be neutralized by teachers who adapt their curriculum and assessment strategies to tap into the cultural strengths of their Latino students.

Home-school cultural conflict and placing family before school

In addition to not valuing education and not giving their children a "head start," Latino parents are also thought to obstruct their children's academic progress by creating home environments that contrast with that of the school. This forces their children to choose between adhering to their family's values and acquiring the cognitive and behavioral skills necessary for school success.

From the culture-blaming perspective, the choice is clear: Latino children have a responsibility to leave their cultural idiosyncrasies behind because the better job they do of imitating Whites the better off they will be (e.g., Ravitch, 1990). Any attempt at maintaining a sense of collective cultural identity is seen as unnecessarily detracting from what should be their ultimate mission: becoming "an American" (C. Hughes, 2003). The time spent on cultural affiliation could be better used by learning the "basics" and becoming a more complete member of US society (Chavez, 1991; R. Rodriguez, 1983).

Culture-blamers further believe that schools have a responsibility to see to it that cultural expression is kept to a minimum. The Thernstroms spell this out clearly:

> No one believes that parents should be shoved aside, or that 'the intellectual and social climate of the home' should be disparaged. But the public schools have a different role: connecting students to the world of academic accomplishment, putting them on the ladder of economic opportunity, and introducing them to the history, culture, and institutions of the nation in which they live" (S. Thernstrom & A. Thernstrom, 2003; p.117).

The implicit message here is that the lessons Latinos learn at home are inconsistent with the "history, culture, and institutions" of the US. The solution, at least according to the Thernstroms, is to encourage maintenance of the familiar culture during non-school hours and assimilation during the regular school day.

A similar sentiment is shared by E. D. Hirsch (Hirsch, 1988; Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 2002) who has proposed a move towards making sure that all US students learn a core body of knowledge that allows them to participate fully in public life. Hirsch's emphasis on the "Americanization" of Latinos is apparent in his choice of concepts that all students should be expected to know. Of the 5000 words Hirsch lists in his original version of the book, there are just 27 that relate to Latinos. Included among those are words such as "wetback," "gringo," and "siesta" (Yosso, 2002; 2006).

Like the Thernstroms and Hirsch, Ruby Payne (1996) also sees it as the school's responsibility to help Latino children realize their cultural limitations. According to Payne, poor students, many of whom are Black or Latino, are seen as victims of their home and neighborhood environments which inadequately prepare them for what is expected of them in school. It is the teacher's job to translate their oddities into something that is more interpretable by the privileged. Teachers are also charged with the task of helping their students overcome the "patterns of thought, social interaction, cognitive strategies, etc" (p.11) that their world has taught them and to "give up relationships for achievement" (p. 11).

In defense of this argument, the idea that Latinos maintain strong family ties is supported by the available research. Studies have shown that Latinos on average are more

likely than Whites to rely on their nuclear and extended family for emotional support and instrumental help (Kamo, 2000; Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006). That being said, it is not necessarily the case that emotional proximity to family is a detriment to Latino academic achievement (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) found that Latino students derive more emotional support from their parents and extended family than White students do, and that this support facilitates the transfer of social capital from parent to child. Furthermore, emotional closeness to family has been shown to be crucial in buffering Latino students from environmental threats such as crime and violence that might otherwise present barriers to academic success (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Lowered academic aspirations

Also consistent with the culture-blaming perspective is the belief that Latino parents draw on cultural norms against post-secondary education in suppressing their children's academic aspirations. From this perspective, Latino students start off being happy to receive good marks and to pass to the next grade, but sooner or later they internalize their culture's antipathy towards higher education and their high school diploma comes to represent a ticket to a low-paying job rather than a credential required for college admission (Kao & Tienda, 1995). This shift towards a more dismissive view of college is thought to be greatly appreciated by their parents who hope to see their children graduate and enter the world of work as soon as possible (see C. M. Suárez-Orosco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 1996)

Latino students' aspirations. Concern about low aspirations is well-founded because research has shown that students with higher aspirations are less likely to drop out (Rumberger, 1995). However, there appears to be considerable disagreement about whether Latinos actually have lower aspirations than other racial/ethnic groups. Some studies have found that they do have lower aspirations than Whites (Mau, 1995; Mau & Bikos, 2000; Swail, Cabrera, & C. Lee, 2004) while others have shown the exact opposite trend (Chácon, E. Cohen, & Strover, 1986; Cheng & Starks, 2002; So, 1987). Still other research has shown that the aspiration gap between White and Latino students increases with age and years in school (Cooper, Denner, & E. Lopez, 1999). According to Stanton-Salazar (2001), this happens because negative school experiences make it less likely that Latino students will reach out to school personnel for help and guidance, which in turn limits their access to support networks that could have a positive impact on their academic goal-setting and performance.

Parental aspirations. Parents implicitly and explicitly communicate their expectations to their children, and their hopes and dreams form the baseline for their children's aspirations (Price, 2002). Therefore, research indicating that Latino parents have low academic aspirations for their children would be a legitimate cause for concern. Once again, however, the research is mixed with some studies showing Latino parents trailing White parents in educational aspirations and others showing more positive results (Azmitia, Cooper, García, Dunbar, 1996; Solórzano, 1986).

A more significant question may be why Latino parents' aspirations are not higher than they are regardless of how they compare to the White standard. One possible answer

is that many Latino parents are unsure of what it takes for their children to be admitted to and attend college and they do not know how to help them get there (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). This problem is worsened by schools that do not take the necessary steps to make Latino parents feel welcomed (Henderson, 1997; Romo & Falbo, 1996). Differences in parental aspirations, if they do exist, may therefore have more to do with knowledge about the college admissions process than about disinterest in or intolerance for post-secondary education.

Spanish as an obstacle to learning

The culture-blaming perspective sees the "language barrier" as another reason why Latino students fall behind in school (see Gándara & Merino, 1993; Valdés, 2001). People who endorse this view generally believe that Latino students should learn to speak English as quickly as possible in order to keep up with curricular objectives (Lieberman, 1993; Ravitch, 1985; Rossell & K. Baker, 1996; S. Thernstrom & A. Thernstrom, 2003). The increasing popularity of this belief is evidenced by the recent surge in pro-English-only mandates and anti-bilingual education school reform, particularly in California and Arizona (Alamillo, Palmer, Viramontes, & García, 2005; García & Wiese, 2002; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Wright, 2004; 2005).

Those who stand against the culture-blaming perspective see the degradation of Spanish as a form of "subtractive schooling" (Valenzuela, 1999) whereby educators try to supplant the home culture with the culture of the school (Garza & Crawford, 2005). They point out that Latinos students often interpret being told to speak in English as an affront to their cultural heritage, their family, and themselves and resist what they feel is forced

assimilation (Revilla & Asato, 2002). Instead of attributing the students' resistance to a fear of "acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), as culture-blamers do, they see it as a logical reaction to cultural oppression.

The anti-Spanish/pro-English position has also been challenged on empirical grounds. Research has shown that students who participate in two-way immersion programs and/or language maintenance programs, both of which allow students to learn content in their native language while simultaneously learning English, do as well or better than students who are forced to learn only in English and students who are placed in separate English Language Learner (ELL) classrooms (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2001; M. López & Tashakkori, 2003; 2004; W. Thomas & Collier, 1996). In addition to having better grades, students in two-way immersion programs have more favorable attitudes towards school and higher academic aspirations (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2002).

Fatalism and lack of personal responsibility

Yet another explanation that emerges from the culture-blaming perspective is that Latino students do not take responsibility for their education. Their unwillingness to take ownership of their schooling experience is thought to reflect a cultural belief in "fatalism," which refers to the belief that forces beyond one's control, such as God or spirits, dictate life's outcomes (Guzmán, Santiago-Rivera, & Haase, 2005).

The claim that Latinos are prone to fatalistic thinking is supported by the available research. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center (2004) found that Latinos are more likely than Whites to endorse fatalism. In fact, over half of the

Spanish-dominant Latinos surveyed indicated that they believe in fatalism whereas less than 20 percent of non-Latinos shared that opinion.

The hypothesized relationship between fatalism and attenuated academic performance is also consistent with existing research. Drawing on National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) data, Huang (1995) found a negative relationship between school grades and fatalistic beliefs among Mexican-American students. In that study, monoliterate Spanish students were more likely to self-identify as fatalistic thinkers than were biliterate or monliterate English students. The monoliterate Spanish students were also the lowest achievers overall.

Given the relationship between fatalism and performance, it is important to consider why so many Latino students adopt a fatalistic outlook towards their schooling (Guzmán, Santiago-Rivera, & Hasse, 2005). According to D. W. Sue and D. Sue (1992), fatalism may reflect a belief in the power of the supernatural or luck, but it may also reveal an awareness of the power of political forces, such as discrimination, in determining life outcomes. So while some Latino students may be following a cultural norm when they choose to leave their achievement to fate, others may be doing so out of a belief that the schooling system does not prioritize their interests.

Matute-Bianchi's (1986) ethnographic study of "Field High" provides a concrete example of this point. The Mexican-American students in her sample were much more likely than similar aged Japanese-American and White students to employ fatalism as a means of disengaging from a school that they felt left them alienated and underserved (see also Romo & Falbo, 1996). The students' application of fatalism in this context may

have had less to do with a cultural norm that glorifies an external locus of control than with a need to psychologically distance themselves from a painful situation (Neff & Hoppe, 1993).

Conceptualization of structure-blaming

The structure-blaming perspective places responsibility for the Latino-White achievement gap on schools and the schooling system (e.g., Crosnoe, 2005; Shields, Esch, Humphrey, Young, Gaston, & Hunt, 1999). Academic gaps are seen as evidence that some groups are given more chances and better rewards than others. In acknowledging that group-based favoritism exists, the structure-blaming position goes against the dominant ideologies of individualism, meritocracy, and the belief in a just world, as well as the dominant racial ideology of color-blindness.

This fundamental disagreement with the dominant ideologies makes structure-blaming an unpopular perspective. It is much simpler to explain a complicated social phenomenon, such as the Latino-White achievement gap, by appealing to commonly accepted beliefs about how the world works than it is to search for more complex, structure-oriented explanations. As is the case with attributions in general, the easiest path is the one that is usually chosen so long as formulating an accurate and comprehensive explanation is not of critical importance.

The popularity of the structure-blaming perspective is further penalized by the fact it does not portray the privileged as deserving of their position atop the academic hierarchy. Consequently, those who have the power to control the dominant means of communication, such as the media and schools, are unmotivated to propagandize the

structure-blaming version of reality (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). Without their support, the structure-blaming position has failed to create a widely shared, publicly endorsed story about the Latino-White achievement gap that brings together the various attributions it espouses.

To be sure, the absence of a dominant story has not totally prevented structure-blaming attributions from being part of the dialogue surrounding the Latino-White achievement gap. Many scholars have gone against the ideological grain to detail the myriad ways in which schools give White students a competitive edge. Pearl's (2002) version of how schools systematically favor White students summarizes these arguments. According to Pearl, macropolicies set down by the federal and state governments and local school boards delimit the possibilities for what goes go in the schools. Teachers, counselors, and school administrators operate within this politically imposed structure to create the conditions that exist in specific schools and classrooms. Because policymakers tend to be White, unfamiliar with Latino culture, and motivated to protect their own racial group interests, educational policy often ignores or goes directly against the needs of Latino students. Teachers and school administrators are powerless to effect meaningful change or act against the system, although they rarely desire to do so anyway because of their own racial biases and group interests. The combination of White-centric policy, school culture, and pedagogy that comes out of this system makes it difficult for Latino students to actualize their full potential.

Some within the structure-blaming camp contend that these inequalities are predicated on the continuing legacy of racial/ethnic segregation (Orfield, 1996; Valencia,

Menchaca, & Donato, 2002). Scholars who have taken this position have pointed out that, according to recent estimates, 73 percent of Latino students go to schools in which the majority of students are not White (Orfield & Yun, 1999). In their opinion, keeping White and Latino students separate means that educational policies that favor certain schools over others (e.g., school finance) also tend to favor one racial/ethnic group over the other.

Other structure-blaming scholars have cautioned that schools that are more racially heterogeneous do not necessarily do a better job of promoting equal outcomes (Avery, 1995; Conger, 2005). They argue that the racial tracking that occurs *within* these more diverse schools tends to create the same unbalanced opportunity and reward structures that exist *between* racially homogeneous schools (Green, 1999; Lucas & Berends, 2002; Oakes & Guitan, 1995). In defending their position, they point to magnet schools that bus suburban White students into schools that would otherwise serve a predominately Latino student body (L. Bush, Burley, and Causey-Bush, 2001). Within these schools, the magnet subdivision is said to function as a "school within a school," which is allegedly code for keeping the academically privileged White students apart from the Latino mainstream (Staiger, 2004). This de facto segregation is thought to damage Latino students' academic self-concept by implying that they are deserving of their subordinate position in the school's academic hierarchy (Valenzuela, 1999).

The following sections unpack the structure-blaming perspective by highlighting the major ways in which schools are thought to create unequal outcomes along

racial/ethnic lines. Each of the sections is intended to elaborate on the structure-blaming construct and to defend the conceptual basis for the items contained within the ASO-L.

Cultural mismatch and discrimination

The under-representation of Latino teachers in the public schools is often cited as a contributing factor to Latino underachievement (Manzo, 1993; Meier, 1991; Valencia & Aburto, 1991). Statistically speaking, it is true that Latino students are more likely than their White counterparts to be taught primarily by teachers who do not share their racial/ethnic status. As recently as 2000, "Hispanic" students represented 16 percent of the total US public school enrollment while "Hispanic" teachers made up less than six percent of the teaching force. The situation was very different for Whites who made up only 61 percent of public school students but 89 percent of the nation's public school teachers (NCES, 2006; Shen, Wegenke, & Cooley, 2003).

Teachers who stand before a classroom full of students with whom they do not share racial/ethnic status are said to be teaching "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995). From a structure-blaming perspective, this means that they do not respond well to their students' different cultural learning styles (Hilliard, 1989) and they do not care very much about their academic progress. The validity of such an assertion is difficult to measure directly; however, related research has shown that cultural mismatch may play an important role in academic performance. D. Taylor and Jaggi (1974) and Duncan (1976) found that stereotyping can lead to faulty attributions that overemphasize the internality of negative outcomes and the externality of positive outcomes, particularly when the attributional target is a member of a stigmatized social group. Given that White

teachers, like the rest of us, exist in an ideological context in which Latinos are stereotyped as being academically apathetic (Valencia & Black, 2002), it is not unreasonable to believe that they could be tempted into over-emphasizing the role of internal factors when explaining why their Latino students are not doing very well.

To the extent that this happens, Latino students are likely to suffer. Research on the effects of attribution errors in academic contexts has shown that teacher expectations can affect academic performance (Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968). Thus, it seems reasonable to believe that at least some White teachers have unduly negative perceptions of Latino students and that those teachers may behave in ways that have an adverse impact on the achievement levels of the Latino students in their class. While it is also true that the opposite could occur—that Latino teachers could discriminate against White students based on race—there are two reasons why this is most likely less of a problem. First, Latinos carry with them the stigma of being academically apathetic whereas Whites do not. This means that there are readymade stories to apply in academic failure situations for Latinos, but not for Whites. Second, it is more common for there to be a White teacher in charge of Latino students than vice versa. Therefore, there is greater opportunity for White teachers to discriminate against Latino children than for the reverse to occur.

Although this explanation seems to suggest that White teachers "have it in for" Latino students, intentionality is not a necessary condition for cultural differences to have a harmful effect on student learning (Kailin, 2002). In her study of a predominately Latino high school, Angela Valenzuela found that while White teachers generally thought

of themselves as being stereotype-free, most stopped short of providing the quality of education Latino students needed in order to flourish. What the majority of the teachers practiced instead was "aesthetic caring," which Valenzuela defines as a superficial form of caring that does not prioritize the best interests of students or help them develop the skills necessary to negotiate a racially hostile school environment. The teachers in her study saw Latino students as repositories for sterile information and as potential rule violators in need of constant surveillance. The cultural strengths that the Latino students brought to the classroom were either ignored or chastised, and the process of cultural identity development was treated as if it were in direct conflict with the purpose of education. Many of the Latino students, tired of being objectified, harassed, and unfairly disciplined, disengaged from school or dropped out altogether.

Pizzarro's (2005) ethnographic study of a California high school corroborates Valenzuela's findings. Pizzarro found that many Latino students who had been identified as low-performing gave up academically because they felt as though their teachers did not care about them or their culture. Similar sentiments were expressed by Latino students in Tan's (2001) and R. Gonzalez and Padilla's (1997) research as well. Adding to this point is research indicating that Latinos who attend segregated schools that employ a greater percentage of Latino teachers aspire towards higher levels of education than Latino students in integrated schools in which White teachers enjoy majority status (Cheng & Starks, 2002).

Inappropriate class placement and bad guidance counseling

Another way that schools are thought to promote differential performance is by tracking Latino students away from academically challenging courses (Green, 1999; Teranishi, Solorzano, & W. Allen, 2004). Although tracking is often thought of as a natural response to the variability in intelligence and academic aptitude that students bring to bear (LeTendre, Hofer, & Shimizu, 2003; Lieberman, 1993; Valencia, 2002), those who operate from a structure-blaming perspective allege that sorting students into slots based on previous academic performance and/or standardized test scores serves another master entirely, namely the US economy (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). They contend that policymakers, administrators, and teachers are aware that the job market only requires that a small percentage of children grow up to be highly educated adults. Knowing this, and driven by an interest in reproducing the socioeconomic hierarchy, they conspire to advance the aspirations and academic pursuits of wealthy and White students while denying opportunities to the poor and racial/ethnic minorities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; McLaren, 1994; Willis, 1977).

The available research supports the basic logic behind these allegations. Students tracked into more challenging courses have higher overall aspirations than students tracked into less challenging courses, and many of those who are pushed into the lowest tracks eventually drop out (Romo, 1998). What's more, these effects are unevenly distributed across the full population of students. Oakes (1985) found that Latinos are far more likely to be tracked into the least challenging courses and far less likely to be placed in the highest level courses. Her study also revealed that Latino students are less likely to

be tracked into advanced placement courses given the same standardized test scores as Asian or White students.

In a separate study of California high schools conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, the proportion of Latino students in a school was found to be negatively correlated with the number of advanced placement courses offered (Pachon & de la Garza, 1996; see also Contreras, 2005; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). The same trend was not found for the proportion of Black or White students within a school. The study also indicated that decisions about how many advanced placement courses to offer were not based on funding, but on beliefs about which types of students would "need" such courses (for similar cases, see Braddock & Dawkins, 1993; Selvin, Koroly, Guiton, & Oakes, 1992).

However, it should be noted that simply offering more advanced placement courses does not appear to be the best solution because even in schools where upper-level courses exist, Latino students often choose not to take them. In Valenzuela's (1999) ethnographic study of a Houston high school, Latinos who had the opportunity to be part of the top track were apprehensive about being the sole Latino in most of their classes. They worried that they would be expected to speak for all Latinos or used as an example of what all Latinos could do if they would only try. They also seemed to be aware at some level that being away from their cultural peers would compromise their ability to tap into the emotionally and psychologically supportive cultural peer networks that they had access to in the lower tracks. In the end, many of the students felt as though the costs

outweighed the rewards and chose to forgo the opportunity to take on more enriching coursework.

Failure to enroll in advanced courses not only limits the quality of curricula Latino students have access to, it also has negative implications for their educational trajectory. As Yosso (2002) explains, under-representation in the highest tracks, whether as a result of externally imposed tracking or self-selection, results in an inordinately high number of bright Latinos finishing high school unprepared for college. Those who do go on to colleges and universities are herded into remedial courses which adds to the stigmatization of Latinos as unfit for college admissions.

The problem of poor collegiate preparation is made worse by guidance counselors who fail to provide accurate and useful information about college admissions and financial aid options to Latino students and their parents (Torrez, 2004), wrongly dismiss capable Latino students as not "college material" (Ceja, 2001), or are so busy that they do not have time to bother with marginally qualified candidates (Henderson; 1997; Yosso, 2006). Many capable Latino students are instead directed towards vocational schools or community colleges, effectively "cooling them out" (Clark, 1980) of the educational pipeline.

Bad Teachers

Attributing differences in performance between Latino and White students to teacher quality is also consistent with structure-blaming logic. The general belief is that Latino students do worse in school because their teachers are neither fluent in the content area nor skilled in delivering the material (Sunderman & Kim, 2005). This is thought to

be due to the fact that teachers assigned to teach Latino students are either relatively new to the profession or simply incapable of teaching well (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

Concern about differential access to quality teachers is well-founded. According to the available research, new teachers do not perform at the same level as more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000), nor they do as well at the start of their careers as they do after a few years of experience (Kain & Singleton, 1996). This is important because differences in teacher quality have been shown to translate to differential performance at the student level. In her review of previous studies on the importance of teacher experience, Rice (2003) found that number of years in the classroom was positively related to student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. In one of the studies Rice reviewed, Hanushek (1992) found that students taught by a high quality teacher gained the equivalent of more than one year in achievement as compared with students who were taught by a teacher of lesser quality.

Furthermore, research has shown that low-income and racial/ethnic minority students tend to have teachers with relatively little classroom experience (Peske & Haycock, 2006) and low standards-based evaluation scores (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Lankford, Loeb, & Wykoff, 2002). This means that there is a non-random distribution of low quality teachers such that there is a predictable, statistical disadvantage to being Latino. Adding to this problem is the fact that many teachers opt out of predominately racial/ethnic minority schools as soon as they have the opportunity to do so (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Rumberger & S. Thomas, 2000; Shen, 1997). So

essentially, schools with a high percentage of Latino students serve as the training grounds for the next generation of good teachers in predominately White schools.

Finally, teachers in low-income and racial/ethnic majority schools tend to have less background knowledge of their subject matter than those who work in predominately White schools (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). This is mainly due to the fact that the former group is more likely to be teaching in a field in which they are not certified. Like years of experience, being certified in the content area has been shown to be positively correlated with student achievement (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Rice, 2003).

Resource disparities

The Supreme Court has ruled that states do not have to fund public schools equally (Versetgen & Whitney, 1997). Instead, the right to a free and appropriate education has been interpreted as meaning that states have to provide an adequate education to all students, not necessarily an equitable one. Some believe that states have taken advantage of the court's ruling to create a fairly substantial funding gap between property wealthy and property poor schools (Stiefel, Schwartz, Berne, & Chellman, 2005). They contend that this has created a situation in which schools in wealthier districts can use their extra money on better school facilities and better in-class resources while schools in poorer districts are left scrambling to cover basic needs. From their perspective, these differences in resource availability are largely responsible for the Latino-White achievement gap because White students are over-represented in wealthier schools and Latinos are over-represented in poorer ones (B. Baker & Green, 2002; Kozol, 1991; 2005).

Technology. One specific way that funding inequities are thought to lead to academic gaps is via differential access to technology (Leigh, 1999). Those who believe that technological differences manifest in differences in learning outcomes assert that having access to computers enables teachers to approach course concepts in ways that are appealing to students (Christmann & Badgett, 1999). They also believe that teachers who have classroom access to the internet are able to draw on an enormous amount of information that is unavailable to teachers who are limited to traditional textbooks (R. Thomas, Adams, Meghani, & M. Smith, 2002). Sweet, Rasher, Abromitis, and E. Johnson (2004) have even gone so far as to suggest that White teachers in technologically advanced schools have higher expectations and care more for their Latino students than those in less technologically enriched ones.

Previous studies on computer knowledge and use have shown that a digital divide does exist. In comparison to White students, Latino students use computers less frequently (USDOC, 2000), have lower opinions of computers, and have lower computer-related confidence (R. Bohlin & C. Bohlin, 2002). However, contrary to the structure-blaming claim of systematic discrimination, it does not appear as though funding inequities are the primary cause of these differences. Hess and Leal (2001) found that among urban schools, the proportion of Black students at the school was a statistically significant predictor of the number of computers at the school whereas the proportion of Latino students was not. According to the US Department of Commerce (2000), the distinguishing feature that sets Latinos and Whites apart in terms of computer knowledge

and efficacy is the availability and use of computers in the home, not the amount of money a school has or how many computers there are per student within the school.

Class size. Another way funding is thought to influence the learning experience is by dictating teacher-pupil ratio (Roza, 2001). Under-funded schools often have larger classes than do adequately funded schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004), and because there is a negative relationship between school funding and the proportion of Latinos at a school, Latino students are more likely to be in schools that feature large classes (Condron & Roscigno, 2003).

According to the available research, class size does impact student achievement (Nye, Hedges, and Konstantopolous, 2004; Pong & Pallas, 2001; Robinson, 1990). Finn and Achilles' (1999) statewide study of student in kindergarten through the third grade revealed that low-income and racial/ethnic minority students who were placed in smaller classes were more likely to take advanced courses and to go to college. Nye, Hedges, and Konstantopolous (2004) found that the academic advantages of small class sizes in the early grades carry over for up to five years after students return to larger-sized classes. Even more impressively, Finn, Gerber, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias (2001) showed that students who were in small classes in kindergarten through third grade were almost a full year ahead of their large-class peers by the time they reached the twelfth grade. Beyond academic achievement, researchers have found that smaller classes are associated with fewer discipline problems, improved campus safety, and better teacher-student relationships (G. Cohen, C. Miller, Stonehill, & Geddes, 2000; Thompson & Cunningham, 2001).

Those who emanate from structural perspective also point out that, because funding is limited, there is often a trade-off between having large classes and bringing the teacher-student ratio down by hiring less qualified teachers (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & S. Brown, 2002; Finn & Achilles, 1999; Jepsen & Rivkin, 2002). This has led some policymakers to argue that class size is not nearly as important as teacher quality in determining student outcomes (Normore & Ilon, 2006). However, regardless of whether class size or teacher quality is the more influential factor, students in schools that are adequately funded have a clear advantage over those in poorer schools because their administrators are not forced to choose between two less than ideal situations (Roza, 2001).

Negative portrayal of Latinos in school curricula

Complaints about the stigmatization or outright neglect of racial/ethnic minorities in textbooks and other school curricula have been raised for decades (e.g., Cortés, 2000; Larrick, 1965; Gollnick & Chinn, 1994; Salvucci, 1991). Those who attribute differences in school performance to the under- and misrepresentation of Latinos in school curricula believe that Latino students internalize the negative images they see, or at the very least, fail to achieve a positive association between being Latino and living a successful life (B. Cruz, 1994). White students, on the other hand, are thought to be constantly inundated with stories of the adventures, conquests, and accomplishments of their ancestors (Loewen, 1995).

According to research conducted by Nina Nilsson (2005), the problem of differential exposure to ethnic-specific images begins in the early years. Her study of

children's books revealed that while images of Latinos are becoming increasingly common, Latino characters are still rarely depicted as living in wealthier neighborhoods or having high status professions. Based on her findings, Nilsson argues that progress needs to be made in the diversification of images so that Latino children will be exposed to a wider array of occupational roles.

Barbara Cruz's (1994) examination of junior and senior high school history textbooks indicates that these problems exist in the older grades as well. Her study found that the people of Latin America are primarily depicted in negative ways, such as being lazy, lustful, and violent. What's more, the most common way that Latin Americans are incorporated into history textbooks was through discussions of military conflict (e.g., Spanish-American War). B. Cruz contends that although these negative images are of Latin American people and not US Latinos specifically, the cognitive and emotional damage extends to Latino students because many are first or second-generation in the US and still maintain a strong cultural connection to the peoples of Latin America.

Others have expressed concern that school curricula tend to be neglectful of the role that racism has had in creating the race-based stratification that exists today (Salvucci, 1991). In his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James Loewen (1995) argues that the failure of many textbook writers to bring the topic of racism into discussions of important historical events, such as slavery, limits students' understanding of why Whites currently enjoy economic, political, and academic advantage. White students are therefore free to assume that their race is where it is due to a culture of hard work and

discipline whereas racial/ethnic minorities are left to ponder why their ancestors did not put them in a position to experience a similar level of success (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The perseverance of the Latino-White achievement gap has led to considerable debate among scholars, politicians, and the general public about causes and potential remedies. However, there are currently no instruments designed to measure the dimensions underlying these explanations or that relate these dimensions to attitudes towards school reform strategies aimed at closing the gap. An instrument of this type would help policymakers better understand why we persist with ineffective solutions. Perhaps after a better understanding is available, real progress can be made in closing the gap.

The study described in the following chapters advances this goal by showing that the ASO-L can be used to measure the ways people reason about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap. The ASO-L is based on the idea that people are motivated to explain the causes for social phenomena in order to gain a sense of mastery over their environment (Kelley, 1967). The attributions they typically choose are those that require the least cognitive effort and offer the most psychic reward (S. Taylor, 1981). Dominant ideologies meet both criteria because they are cognitively simplistic and are amenable to hedonic biases such as the just-world belief and the actor-observer effect (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986).

In addition to being influenced by these dominant ideologies, people socialized in the US are also affected by a racial ideology of color-blindness. Whereas previous

generations explained differences in life outcomes between Whites and racial/ethnic minorities in terms of genetics and hereditarianism, modern expressions of racism tend to revolve around cultural factors (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a; Valencia, 1997). Because this way of viewing differences is socially acceptable, focusing on alleged cultural deficits rather than race allows also allows White people to advance racial goals without appearing racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). The dominant racial story, which characterizes Latino parents as academically apathetic, synthesizes these culture-focused beliefs into a coherent, and commonly accepted whole.

I refer to attributions that are consistent with the dominant racial story as "culture-blaming." When applied to the case of the Latino-White achievement gap, culture-blaming attributions focus on problems associated with Latino culture, including lowered aspirations, low levels of intellectual stimulation in the home, a poor work ethic, a reluctance to take responsibility for educational outcomes, a tendency to place family before school, and a fixation of the use of Spanish.

I call attributions that challenge this way of thinking "structure-blaming." Structure-blaming attributions place responsibility for the Latino-White achievement gap on schools and the schooling system. People who make these sorts of attributions focus on problems stemming from teacher-student cultural mismatch, inappropriate placement of Latino students in the lowest tracks, differences in resource allotment, and a negative portrayal of Latinos in school curricula.

According to dominant ideology theorists, the causal explanations given for a particular social issue relate to beliefs about what should be done to fix it (Kluegel & E.

R. Smith, 1986; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Kryson, 1985). Consistent with this hypothesis, this study shows that the extent to which people endorse culture-blaming and structure-blaming attributions relates to their attitudes towards what should be done to bring Latino students up to par with Whites.

Hypotheses

Research Question 1

What are the primary explanatory types that characterize reasoning about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap?

Hypothesis 1

Confirmatory factor analyses will show that a two-factor model describes the traits underlying explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap.

Rationale

I have defined culture-blaming as the belief that familial and cultural differences between Latinos and Whites manifest in differential academic performance. This type of attribution is driven by the dominant racial story and is consistent with the dominant ideologies of individualism and meritocracy, as well as the modern day racial ideology of color-blind racism. Those who endorse culture-blaming attributions believe that the Latino-White achievement gap can be explained by differences in the degree to which parents emphasize the importance of education, the amount of cognitive stimulation in the home, the extent to which the home culture matches the culture of the school, parental aspirations, willingness to achieve English proficiency, and the extent to which students from each group take responsibility for their education.

I use the term "structure-blaming" to refer to the belief that schools and society are to blame for the Latino-White achievement gap. It runs contrary to "victim-blaming" attributions because it is appreciative of the non-random effects of institutionalized racism. People who cite structure-blaming causes believe that White teachers hold negative stereotypes of Latino students and underestimate their potential. They also believe that Latino students are forced into the lowest academic tracks and denied the full attention of school counselors. Teachers of Latino students are thought to be of lower quality than teachers of White students. School curricula are seen as being neglectful of Latino accomplishments or depicting Latinos in negative ways. Finally, it is believed that the amount and quality of resources made available to teachers and students vary according to the proportion of Latino students in the school and that these differences lead to differential performance along racial/ethnic lines.

Research Question 2

Are these traits related to preferences for how to ameliorate the Latino-White achievement gap?

Hypothesis 2

Culture-blaming should be positively related to attitudes towards tracking, standardized testing, parenting classes, and English-only classrooms and negatively related to attitudes towards school finance reform. Structure-blaming should be negatively related to attitudes towards tracking, standardized testing, parenting classes, and English-only classrooms and positively related to attitudes towards school finance reform.

Rationale

Tracking is often thought of as a means of grouping students based on perceived academic ability so that all students can be taught at a level that is appropriate to their needs (Green, 1999). The main problem with this strategy is that it has led to within-school segregation along racial/ethnic lines such that White students are more likely to be tracked towards advanced placement and gifted and talented courses whereas Latino students are pushed towards the lowest tracks (Oakes & Gaitan, 1995).

Although tracking involves a response on behalf of the school, it still relies on the underlying assumption that the most meaningful differences between Latino and White students lie at the student level. There are no changes in the way schools are financed, the value teachers place on Latino culture, the way Latino student are portrayed in textbooks and so on. Therefore, tracking should be approved of by people who hold negative ability stereotypes about Latinos (i.e., people high on culture-blaming) and disapproved of by people who believe that schools are responsible for creating the Latino-White achievement gap (i.e., people high on structure-blaming).

Culture-blaming should also be positively related to attitudes towards English-only initiatives because people who cite cultural differences for the Latino-White achievement gap see the inability or unwillingness of Latino students to speak English at school as a detriment to their academic progress. This position is reflective of a more global assimilationist perspective that views maintenance of an ethnic identity as contrary to national ideals (e.g., R. Rodriguez, 1983). English-only initiatives would therefore be

considered a good solution because they foster an "American" cultural identity while also preparing students to work in an English-speaking society.

Those who emanate from a structure-blaming perspective are expected to hold negative views of English-only initiatives because they believe that forcing students to speak only in English is a form of "subtractive schooling" (Valenzuela, 1999). They would instead prefer to change teachers, counselors, and curricula to be more appreciative of the cultural strengths that students bring to bear.

Parent education is the school reform strategy that is expected to get the strongest support from people who endorse culture-blaming attributions. Recommending that Latino parents attend parenting classes implies that they know less about appropriate childrearing practices than White parents do. Moreover, parent education classes do not threaten to change any aspect of the schooling system. Parents are expected to conform to the goals of the school and to teach their children how to adapt their thinking and behaving to be in line with the school's expectations of them.

The structure-blaming perspective disagrees with the basic premise that is the Latino family that should change rather than the school. People who posses a high level of structure-blaming would tend to think in terms of preparing teachers and school counselors to relate to Latino students and their parents.

The culture-blaming perspective is also expected to be associated with positive attitudes towards standardized testing. "Accountability" appears to place the blame for academic outcomes on teachers and schools. However, because funding disparities are not addressed by the accountability movement, schools and teachers are expected to

compete equally on an uneven playing field (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006). Thus, people who like the idea of standardized testing are not asking for changes in the most important features of the schooling system, but calling for individual teachers and students to do better.

Those who blame structural causes are expected to hold the opposite view because they believe that it is the schooling system that must change. They may be aware that the increased emphasis on accountability has ushered in changes in the way teachers approach the curriculum (McNeil, 2000). Schools at risk of being labeled low-performing must exhaust a tremendous share of their human and material resources in making sure that a sufficient percentage of students pass the state mandated test. Fearing the penalties associated with being labeled low-performing, school personnel do their best to make sure that their students are as prepared as possible for the test each and every time it is administered (Booher-Jennings, 2005). The natural response of many principals has been to strongly encourage teachers to teach to the test (Sacks, 1999). This has involved not only covering the content that is supposed to be on the test, but also developing students' test taking competencies. As a result, activities designed to promote problem-solving and abstract thinking skills take a back seat to drill-and-kill sessions (McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001).

They may also know that Latino students are the ones who have born the brunt of these pedagogical changes. Since Latinos are more likely than Whites to attend schools at risk of being labeled low-performing, they are more likely to be subjected to the "teach to the test" method of schooling (McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Sloan, 2005). This has

created two different forms of education: one in which Latinos, Blacks, and poor Whites are expected to learn a minimal amount of rote information and one in which wealthy Whites are expected to learn how to think.

Finally, they are more likely to worry that the long-term consequences associated with failure on high stakes tests disproportionately affect Latino students. Students who do not pass the exam in the specified number of tries may be forced to repeat their current grade, even if doing so means the difference between graduating and being a high school senior for another year. Research overwhelmingly shows that repeating a grade at any point in the educational path is a statistically significant predictor of dropping out (Alexander, Entwisle, Kabbani, 2001; C. Holmes & Saturday, 2000; Jimerson, Carlson, England, Stroufe, 1997).

The only school reform strategy that is expected to be negatively related to culture-blaming and positively related to structure-blaming is resource redistribution. There are two differences between resource redistribution and the other school reform strategies that account for these hypotheses. First, resource redistribution acknowledges that a variable that favors White students is structured into the schooling system. All of the other strategies target students, their families, or specific teachers and schools. Only resource redistribution makes claims to a systemic cause for the Latino-White achievement gap that lies outside of Latino families and their culture.

Second, resource redistribution is the only strategy that threatens to take something away from one group in order to give it to another. Tracking, English-only initiatives, parent education classes, and standardized testing are framed in ways that

make it seem as though Latino students are getting something extra without White students losing out in the process. Because culture-blamers do not believe that the system unfairly caters to the needs of White students, they will be more likely to see resource redistribution as giving Latino student an unfair advantage. Structure-blamers, on the other hand, would see the fair division of resources as a major step towards ensuring equitable outcomes.

Research Question 3

Are the relationships between the ASO-L constructs (i.e., culture-blaming and structure-blaming) and school reform attitudes explained by attributional complexity (AC) and political orientation?

Hypothesis 3

Scores on the ASO-L constructs will be related to attitudes towards school reform above and beyond what is contributed by political orientation and AC.

Rationale

AC is a measure of a person's preference for complex explanations for social phenomena. Since structure-blaming explanations are less ideological and less stereotype-driven than culture-blaming attributions are, people who score high on structure-blaming are also expected to score high on AC. Conversely, people who score high on culture-blaming tend to look more favorably on the dominant ideologies and are therefore less likely to search for complex explanations.

The relationships between AC and attitudes towards the five school reform strategies are expected to parallel the relationships between structure-blaming and

attitudes towards the school reform strategies. That is, AC is expected to have a negative relationship with attitudes towards tracking, English-only initiatives, parent education, and standardized testing and a positive relationship with attitudes towards resource redistribution. This is because tracking, English-only initiatives, and parent education are the prevailing ways of thinking about how to close the gap, so it takes less cognitive effort to think in those terms. Redistribution of resources is a fairly complex idea that would not appeal to people seeking easy solutions to the problem. Despite this commonality, culture-blaming and structure-blaming will still add predictive value above and beyond what is accounted for by AC because they assess the extent to which people endorse two different explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap, not whether they prefer simple or complex explanations per se.

In regards to political orientation, previous studies have shown that conservatives tend to score high on measures of system-justification (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). It would therefore be unlikely that people who score high on structure-blaming would also score high on conservatism. On the other hand, those who score high on culture-blaming tend to believe that Latinos and Latino culture should be changed, not schools or the schooling system. This view is consistent with a system-justifying orientation, so a positive relationship between culture-blaming and conservatism should be expected.

The relationship between attributional preference and liberalism is more complex. Neo-liberalism has at its core the principle of equal opportunity (Delgado, 1995). People who believe that Latinos are kept back by externally imposed cultural differences could

interpret the dominant racial story as one in which the ideal of equal opportunity has been violated. For instance, they may believe that Latino students are victims of a society that forces them into poverty and that the cultural patterns that have developed over time in response to living in poverty are what ultimately prevent them from succeeding academically. In order for Latino children to do well in school, they must break free from the "culture of poverty" and assimilate into White mainstream society.

People who have a structure-blaming outlook are also expected to score high on liberalism because they believe that the schooling system systematically denies Latino children an equal opportunity to succeed. For these folks, it is the schools rather than acquired cultural traits that violate the principle of equal opportunity.

In terms of the relationships between political orientation and school reform attitudes, conservatives are expected to hold favorable opinions of tracking, English-only initiatives, and standardized testing as evidenced by the fact that they have been arguing on behalf of these strategies for many years (Bali, Anagnostopolous, & Roberts, 2005; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Stefancic & Delgado, 1996). Also, since conservatives tend to be assimilationists (e.g., S. Thernstrom & A. Thernstrom, 2003), they are expected to hold positive opinions of parent education. Liberals, operating out of the long-standing assimilationist tradition of the Great Society, also have contended that parent education is a necessary measure for improving the academic achievement of racial/ethnic minorities. Also, because standardized testing and English-only initiatives have been marketed as means by which to ensure equal quality of education and equal access to education respectively, liberals would be expected to hold these strategies in high regard.

Conversely, because tracking is often portrayed as a way of preventing students from having equal access to quality education, liberals are expected to have a negative opinion of this school reform strategy.

Both conservatives and liberals are expected to hold negative attitudes towards resource redistribution. For conservatives, resource redistribution violates the principles of meritocracy and individualism (Sniderman & Carmines, 1997). In their eyes, rich Whites deserve to be able send their children to better schools because they have worked hard enough to earn that privilege. Although liberals claim to be more sympathetic to the plight of racial/ethnic minorities, they are prone to exhibiting the principle-implementation gap on racialized issues (Forman, 2004; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1985). In other words, even though they acknowledge that there are group disparities in educational opportunity, they believe that it is up to individuals to overcome the obstacles that lie in their path.

Given these hypothesized relationships, it is clear that political orientation is not expected to fully mediate the relationships between the ASO-L constructs and school reform attitudes. This is largely because the dominant racial story about the Latino-White achievement gap is generally accepted by people on both sides of the political divide whereas the counter-hegemony of structure-blaming is accepted by a small minority of people of either political orientation. The ASO-L will therefore serve as a better predictor of school reform attitudes than political orientation because it provides a more precise measure of adherence to each of the two primary explanatory types underlying thinking about the Latino-White achievement gap.

Research Question 4

Are there differences between Latinos and Whites in terms of their preference for culture-blaming and structure-blaming attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap?

Hypothesis 4

Whites will score higher than Latinos on culture-blaming. Latinos will score higher than Whites on structure-blaming.

Rationale

Whites are more motivated than Latinos to endorse culture-blaming attributions because they are in position to derive a sense of group identity from positive social comparison. Culture-blaming attributions, which are consistent with the dominant racial story, make the positive social comparison that arises out of the Latino-White achievement gap seem natural and just. In contrast, attributing the better performance of White students to structural causes invalidates a claim to superiority because it acknowledges that Whites have an unfair advantage over Latinos.

Whites are also likely to oppose structure-blaming explanations to the extent that imply structural solutions (B. Lee, D. Lewis, & S. Jones, 1992). According to Beirhoff (2002), people are less likely to help when they feel as though the person or group in need is at fault or when they believe that the cost of helping is high and the likelihood of a successful outcome is low. Withholding help in either of these situations reinforces the belief that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. In the present case, Whites may feel less willing to divert resources to close the Latino-White

achievement gap if they believe that Latinos are to blame or if they feel as though providing a significant amount of help would still leave the gap more or less unchanged. More than likely, they will reframe their understanding of the problem to assign fault to Latinos, thereby reestablishing their faith in a just world.

According to the actor-observer effect, we would expect to see high scores on structure-blaming and low scores on culture-blaming among Latinos because being in the "actor" role would make them more aware of the situational variables influencing their academic performance. Furthermore, due to hedonic bias, Latino should prefer structure-blaming attributions because they would want to externalize responsibility for their weak academic performance relative to Whites.

At the same time, it is important to consider the broader ideological context within which these biases are nested. Like Whites, Latinos are affected by the dominant ideologies of meritocracy, individualism, the belief in a just world, as well as the dominant racial ideology of color-blindness. These ideologies offset, at least to some extent, what should otherwise be a clear preference for structure-blaming explanations. Latinos are therefore more likely than Whites to make structure-blaming attributions and less likely to make culture-blaming attributions, although the difference in preference for culture-blaming attributions between Latinos and Whites is expected to be rather small.

Chapter Three: Method

Overview of Methods

My study consisted of a pilot study followed by a full administration. The pilot study was intended to field test the original set of items comprising the ASO-L to determine how well they measured the culture-blaming and structure-blaming constructs. Items that had favorable psychometric properties in the pilot study were retained. Those that did not function as well were discarded. New items were then written to replace those that were discarded to ensure adequate coverage of the theoretical content domain.

In the full administration, a new sample of participants completed the revised version of the ASO-L. Reliability estimates were obtained to assess the internal consistency of the scores from the subscales. Confirmatory factor analyses were then performed to evaluate whether the data conformed to the proposed two-factor model. The items that did the best job of measuring the culture-blaming and structure-blaming constructs, as indicated by theoretical considerations and psychometric criteria, were included in the full administration version of the ASO-L.

Participants in the full administration also completed a measure of attributional complexity (ACS; G. Fletcher, et al., 1986), a measure of political orientation (Kerlinger, 1984), and a questionnaire that measured their opinions on tracking, standardized testing, resource redistribution, parenting classes, and English-only initiatives as methods for closing the Latino-White achievement gap. Structural equation modeling was performed on the data to test whether AC and political orientation mediate the relationships between culture-blaming and structure-blaming and school reform attitudes. As a final step, a

comparison of latent means was performed to determine whether Latinos and Whites have differing levels of the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits.

Pilot study

Participants

The pilot sample originally consisted of 403 participants who were assigned to the study by the coordinator of the Department of Educational Psychology Subject Pool at The University of Texas at Austin. The responses of four participants were omitted because they indicated multiple responses on several items (n =2) or because they indicated the same response on all items or all items after a very early point in the scale (n = 2). Removal of these participants from the sample left a final total of 399 observations. In exchange for completing the study, each participant received one hour of research credit in their educational psychology class. Those who were assigned to the study but chose not participate had the opportunity to complete an alternate assignment that substituted for research participation.

A majority of the participants were female (72.4%; see Table 1). There were more White participants (56.4%), than Latino (18.5%), Asian/Asian-American (14%), multiracial (5.8%), Black (4%), and American Indian (0%) participants combined. Almost half of the participants indicated that their family was "upper middle-class" when they were growing up (42.4%). Smaller numbers indicated that their family was "middle-class" (33.6%), "working class" (11.8%), "upper class" (6.5%), or "lower class" (2.8%). Chi-square analyses revealed a statistical significant association $\chi^2(6, N= 299)= 32.56$; $p<$

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Pilot Sample

Demographic variable	Number	Percent
Sex		
Female	289	72.4
Male	109	27.3
Race/ethnicity		
White	225	56.4
Latino	74	18.5
Asian/Asian-American	56	14.0
Multiracial	23	5.8
Black	16	4.0
American Indian	0	0.0
Social class		
Upper class	26	6.5
Upper middle-class	169	42.4
Middle-class	134	33.6
Working class	47	11.8
Lower class	11	2.8

.01 between race and social class among Whites and Latinos with Whites on average coming from wealthier families.

Procedure

Participants were issued a letter of consent, which they returned upon completion of the study. In order to protect the participants' confidentiality, the researcher kept the returned letters of consent separate from all other data. Participants were informed that if they elected to stop participating at any time they would not be penalized and their data would not be included in the analyses.

The ASO-L (labeled "Causes for the Latino-White Achievement Gap"; see Appendix A) and a demographic questionnaire were included in a survey packet. Rooms were made available on site for the participants to use. Due to logistical constraints, it was often necessary to have multiple participants working in the same room. The researcher did not supervise the participants while they were completing the surveys to reduce the likelihood of demand characteristics influencing the responses. Upon completing the surveys, participants returned their packets and received a debriefing form, which informed them of the purpose of the study and provided the researcher's contact information.

Measures

The pilot version of the ASO-L contained 26 items. The literature on culture-blaming and structure-blaming served as the conceptual basis for the initial phase of item development. Ten items were written to be culture-blaming attributions. These items were intended to measure the extent to which respondents believe that differences in

familial and cultural values account for the Latino-White achievement gap. Thirteen items were written in the form of structural attributions. These items were written to measure the extent to which respondents believe that schools and society have created conditions in which it is more likely that Whites will outperform Latinos academically. Three additional items were written to reflect genetic attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap. These items focused on alleged genetic differences between Latinos and Whites. They were included in the pilot version of the ASO-L to gauge how prevalent "old-fashioned" genetics-based explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap are in modern times and to see whether the inclusion of a third factor in the empirical model would be necessary. All 26 items were combined into one group, scrambled, and sampled one at a time to avoid order effects.

A paragraph appearing at the top of the first page provided the stimulus. This paragraph informed participants that Latino students, on average, under-perform relative to White students. The paragraph further explained that, although scholars have proposed several reasons for these differences, they have not settled on any specific causes. Following the paragraph was a set of instructions that directed the participants to indicate how important they felt each of the factors listed in the questionnaire is in explaining the Latino-White achievement gap. The participants responded to each item using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Extremely Unimportant" to "Extremely Important" with a midpoint labeled "Neutral."

Results

Item characteristics

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the items that made up the pilot version of the ASO-L. As the table shows, respondents used the full range of response options. The skew and kurtosis of each item were inspected to ensure that the data did not violate the univariate normality assumption associated with maximum likelihood estimation. As a general rule, skew with an absolute value greater than three or kurtosis with an absolute value greater than 10 may be indicative of problematic nonormality (Hu, Bentler & Kano, 1992; Kline, 1998). Because none of the items approached these thresholds, no data transformations to address non-normality were necessary.

ASO-L calibration and validation samples

Although showing that a model fits one sample provides useful information as to whether the hypothesized relationships actually represent the true nature of the data, providing convincing evidence of good fit requires subjecting the same model to several samples drawn from the target population (Byrne, 1994). With this in mind, the data collected in the pilot study were split into two separate sets. The first half-sample (i.e., "calibration sample") contained data from all of the respondents who participated on the final day the study was open (N= 185). The second half-sample ("validation sample") was made up of everyone who participated prior to that day (N= 214).

ASO-L calibration sample CFA. At this point, it was possible to begin the model testing process. The first step was to extract the items that were written to reflect genetics-based explanations (i.e., items 5, 7, and 24) due to their low overall

Table 2: Item Characteristics for the Pilot Version of the ASO-L

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skew	Kurtosis
Item 1	3.62	1.00	-.80	.41
Item 2	3.03	1.16	-.26	-.92
Item 3	3.15	1.20	-.35	-.82
Item 4	3.89	.97	-.92	.51
Item 5	1.81	1.07	1.20	.51
Item 6	3.20	1.15	-.38	-.79
Item 7	1.79	1.04	1.12	.15
Item 8	3.37	1.15	-.53	-.58
Item 9	3.32	1.26	-.42	-.92
Item 10	3.33	1.26	.52	-.81
Item 11	2.92	1.32	-.03	-1.16
Item 12	3.47	1.15	-.67	-.32
Item 13	2.86	1.22	-.11	-1.06
Item 14	3.47	1.15	-.63	-.45
Item 15	3.34	1.23	.48	-.77
Item 16	3.93	.97	-1.01	.80
Item 17	3.43	1.01	-.39	-.09
Item 18	3.18	1.22	-.31	-.84
Item 19	3.08	1.10	-.24	-.81
Item 20	3.78	.97	-.82	.32
Item 21	3.38	1.08	-.39	-.58
Item 22	2.96	1.25	-.11	-1.04
Item 23	3.28	1.16	-.43	-.69
Item 24	1.98	1.12	.84	-.44
Item 25	3.88	0.99	.83	.25
Item 26	2.87	1.15	1.15	-.82

endorsement. After these items were removed, the fit of the full model with all of the remaining ASO-L items set to load on their proposed factors was evaluated using the maximum likelihood estimation procedure available in the EQS program (Bentler, 2002; see Figure 1). A chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic was calculated to evaluate how well the model recovered the sample covariance matrix. Given the known sensitivity of the chi-square statistic to large sample sizes, a combination rule utilizing the standardized root mean residual (SRMR) and the root mean squared error (RMSEA) was applied. According to Hu and Bentler, (1999), a model is said to have good fit if the SRMR is less than .08 and the RMSEA is less .06. Sivo, Fan, Witta, and Willse (2006) have since updated these recommendations. In their study, they found that with large sample sizes (e.g., $N > 150$) a more relaxed cut-off score for the RMSEA and SRMR still correctly "rejects" false models. Therefore, using the combination proposed by Hu and Bentler has the advantage of erring on the side of being slightly conservative.

The full model was determined to have poor fit as evidenced by both the chi-square test ($\chi^2(230, N=185)= 600.44, p< .01$) and the combination rule (SRMR= .155; RMSEA= .094). The next step was to eliminate those items that appeared to be functioning poorly. Because the purpose of the pilot study was to assess the behavior of each item in order to identify those that hold the greatest potential for capturing the nature of the culture-blaming and structure-blaming constructs, this process was intentionally exploratory in nature. Five factors were taken into consideration at each step of the model re-specification process. First, an effort was made to fully cover the content domain. This meant that if two items were functioning equally, and if one of the items

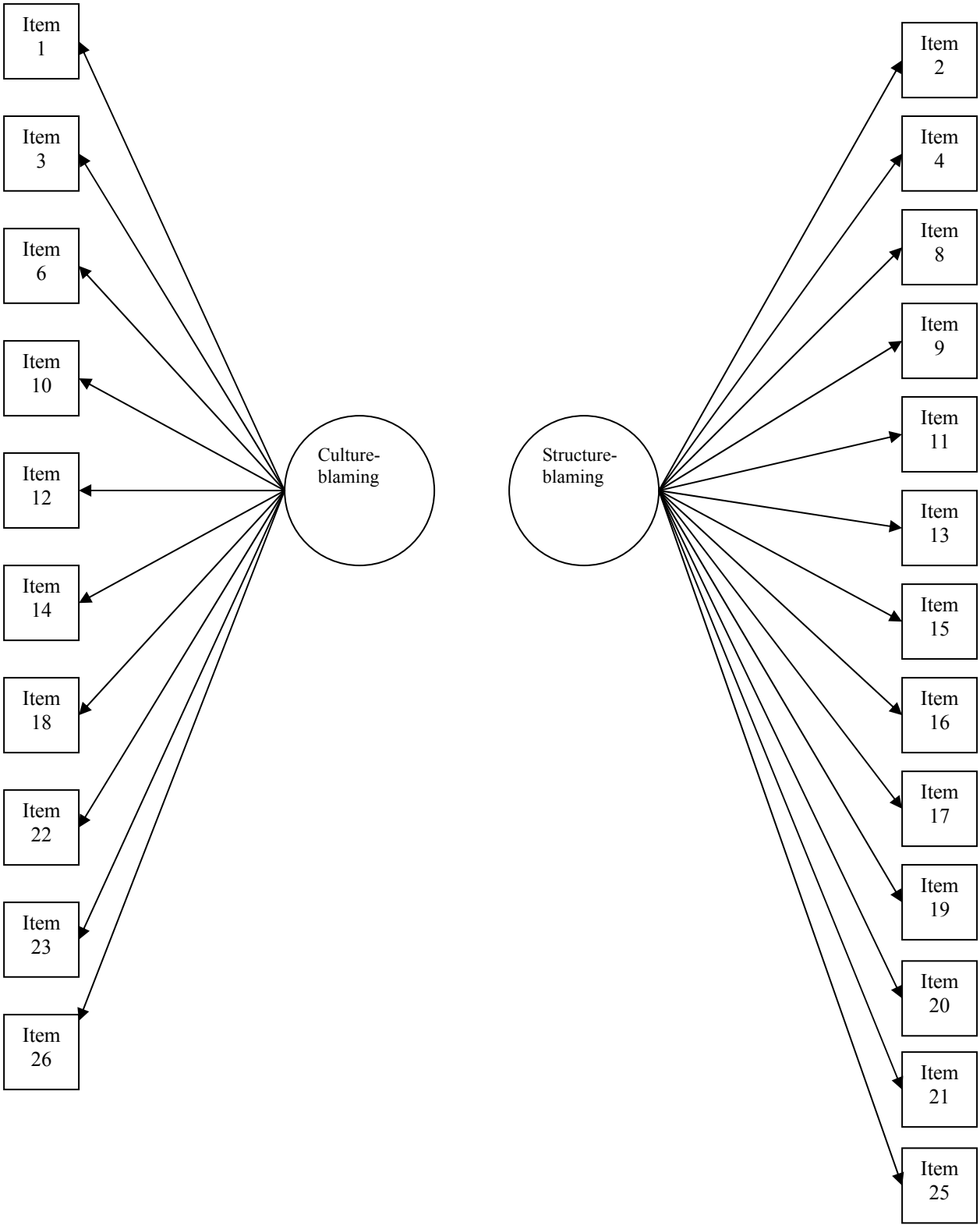

Figure 1: Proposed Full Model for the ASO-L

was intended to tap into an area that was already addressed by another item in the scale, that item would be eliminated. Second, items were not allowed to cross-load. This rule was employed because, theoretically, the items should only be related to the factor that they were written to represent. Third, and for similar reasons, correlated error terms were not included the model. Fourth, the chi-square statistic, the SRMR, and the RMSEA were referenced to evaluate how well the model performed at each step. Fifth, the factor loadings were inspected to see how much of the variance in each item was explained by the model.

In accordance with these decision rules, the first item to be dropped was "The school curriculum tends to show more positive images of White students than of Latino students." Eliminating this item from the scale (i.e., constraining its factor loading to zero) resulted in better overall model fit (χ^2 (209, N= 185)= 545.49, p< .01; SRMR= .120; RMSEA= .094). The next item to be removed was "The way schools are run reflects White culture more than Latino culture." Dropping this item also resulted in improved fit (χ^2(189, N= 185)= 477.91, p< 0.01; SRMR= .120; RMSEA= .091). The process of eliminating poorly functioning items based on the aforementioned criteria and re-estimating the model continued until a final model with good fit and acceptable coverage of the content domain was achieved (see Figure 2 and Table 3). The chi-square associated with the final model was not statistically significant at the .01 level (χ^2(35, N= 189)= 52.03, p= .03) and the combined fit index rules (SRMR = .056; RMSEA= .048) indicated that the model had good fit. Additionally, the largest standardized residual was

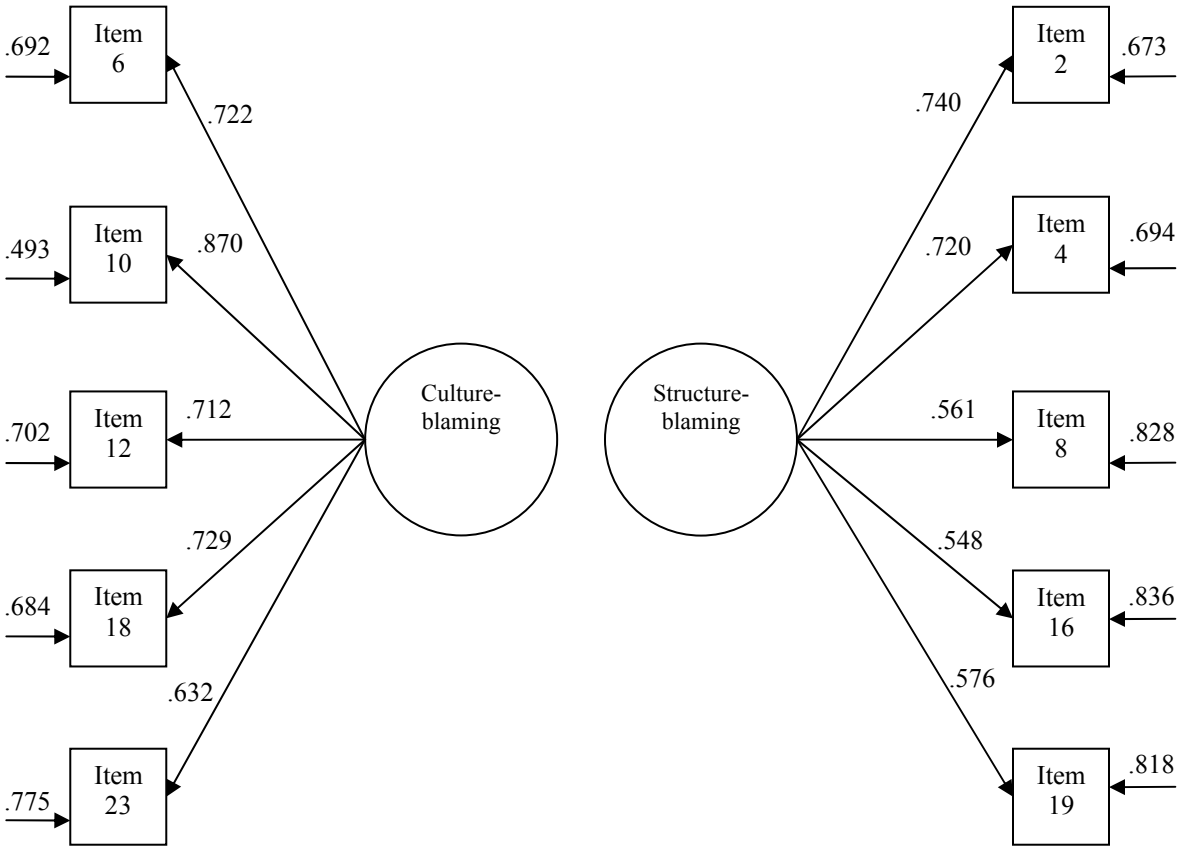

Figure 2: Final Model of the Pilot Version of the ASO-L

Table 3: Item Wording for Figure 2

Item #	Wording of the actual item
Culture-blaming	
6	Latino students are less likely to take responsibility for their education than White students
10	Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents
12	Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family
18	White parents do a better job than Latino parents of emphasizing to their children that you have to work hard to get good grades
23	Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students
Structure-blaming	
2	Latino students have a greater chance than White students of getting bad teachers
4	The schools that Latino students attend are not as good as the schools White students attend
8	White students usually get placed in more challenging courses than Latino students
16	Schools with mostly Latino students tend to have fewer resources than schools with mostly White students
19	Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students

.149 and only five residuals were greater than .10 suggesting that the implied correlation matrix closely approximated the sample correlation matrix (see Table 4).

An analysis of the proportion of variance explained by the factors led to a somewhat less optimistic outlook. Only 40 percent of the variance in the items intended to measure structure-blaming was accounted for by the scale. This compared with approximately 54 percent of the variance in items intended to measure culture-blaming. Cronbach's alpha estimates indicated that the culture-blaming (α= .82) subscale also outperformed the structure-blaming subscale (α= .73) in terms of internal consistency.

ASO-L validation sample CFA. The next step was to test the proposed model against the validation sample data. In order to evaluate whether the proposed model generalized to the validation sample, the factor loadings were constrained to be equal in both models. If none of the constraints needed to be relaxed in order to achieve good fit, then the model could be said to fit both samples similarly. Conversely, the more constraints that needed to be lifted in order to achieve good fit, the less generalizable the model would be.

The chi-square associated with the validation sample indicated poor model fit ($\chi^2(80, N=212)= 138.11, p< .01$) and the change in chi-square from the full to the restricted model was statistically significant ($\Delta\chi^2(45, N= 212)= 86.08, p< .01$). However, the incremental fit indices (SRMR= .073; RMSEA= .043) met their respective cutoff criteria, and the LaGrange Multiplier test indicated that none of the constraints had a statistically significant negative impact on the model chi-square value. Based on these

Table 4: Standardized Residual Matrix (Calibration Sample)

	V2	V4	V6	V8	V10	V12	V16	V18	V19	V24
V2	.000									
V4	.038	.000								
V6	-.064	.010	.000							
V8	-.016	-.016	.069	.000						
V10	-.053	.001	-.003	.070	.000					
V12	-.034	.061	-.020	.149	.016	.000				
V16	-.062	.030	-.045	-.010	-.084	-.073	.000			
V18	.005	.009	.032	.135	-.023	.012	-.001	.000		
V19	.006	-.083	-.076	.067	-.139	-.037	.075	.003	.000	
V24	.041	.134	-.012	.127	.016	-.045	.068	.017	.042	.000

results, the model was shown to have factorial invariance, which means that there is reason to believe that the same basic factor structure holds in the population. Metric invariance, a stricter form of invariance that requires equivalence of factor loadings, was not achieved as evidenced by the statistically significant change in chi-square from the unconstrained to the constrained model.

Full Study

Procedure

Participants who chose to be part of the study were informed of their right to discontinue their participation at any time. Those who chose not to participate had the opportunity to complete an alternate assignment given to them by their instructor as a substitute for research credit.

Unlike the pilot study, the full administration incorporated a counter-balancing strategy which involved passing out two packets to each participant. Half of the participants were issued a first packet containing the ASO-L and the Attributions for School Reform Policies (ASRP) and the other half were issued a first packet containing measures of attributional complexity (ACS; G. Fletcher et al., 1986) and political orientation ("Social Attitude Questionnaire"; SAQ; Kerlinger, 1984). When the participants returned the first packet, they were issued a second packet containing the instruments they did not receive the first time. This counter-balancing strategy was intended to randomize the effects of seeing the mediators (i.e., ACS and SAQ) and the ASO-L and ASRP in the same research session.

Regardless of group assignment, the second packet always contained a demographic questionnaire that asked participants how they identified racially/ethnically (i.e., White, Latino, Asian/Asian American, Black, or American Indian; see Appendix B). To avoid foreclosing on participants' self-identification, they were allowed to check as many of the options as they felt described their racial/ethnic identity. In addition to indicating racial/ethnic assignment, participants were also asked to specify their class status (e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.) and family SES when they were growing up. When they returned the second packet, the participants received a debriefing sheet which explained the purpose of the study and provided them with the researcher's contact information so they could inquire about the final results of the study at a later time.

Measures

ASO-L

The revised ASO-L (see Appendix C) included the 12 items that were derived from the pilot study and 8 pilot items that were intended to test the boundaries of the theoretical content domain. Four of these items were written to tap beliefs about language barriers, role-modeling within the family, culture-specific problems that students bring with them to school, and the inability of teachers to reach Latino students. The other four items, which focused on problems Latinos have in their homes, racial discrimination, the failure of school counselors to serve Latino students, and the tendency for teachers to underestimate the abilities of Latino students, were re-written to better represent their parent constructs. The scale incorporated a five-point Likert-type response format

ranging from “Extremely Unimportant” to “Extremely Important” with a “Neutral” midpoint.

ACS

The ACS is designed to measure “preference for complex rather than simple explanations” for social phenomena (p. 876; G. Fletcher, et al., 1986; see Appendix D). The scale contains 28 items that are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” with a midpoint labeled “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” High scores correspond to high levels of AC.

Several studies have evaluated the reliability and validity of ACS scores and found satisfactory results. In the original study, G. Fletcher et al. (1986) reported an internal consistency estimate of .85 and a test-retest estimate of .80. Factor analyses revealed one higher-order factor and seven lower order factors. In accordance with this finding and the trend set by previous studies using the ACS (e.g., Horhota & Blanchard-Fields, 2006; Lassiter, Munhall, Berger, Weiland, Handley, & Geers, 2005), composite scores (i.e., sum of subscale scores) were used.

In regards to construct validity, G. Fletcher et al. (1986) showed that the AC is not highly correlated with internal-external locus of control or ACT scores. Their study also found that people who score high on attributional complexity (AC) incorporate more information into their causal judgments. Subsequent research has also shown that they are also more likely to factor in inconsistent information (Murphy, 1994) than are people low in AC.

The ACS was chosen as a mediator because previous research has found that AC may influence the causal reasoning process in ways pertinent to the present analyses. For example, there appears to be an inverse relationship between AC and susceptibility to the actor-observer effect (S. Wilson, Levine, M. Cruz, and Rao, 1997), correspondence bias (G. Fletcher, Rosanowski, Rhodes, & Lange, 1992), and the fundamental attribution error (Blumberg & Silvera, 1998). Attributionally complex people also tend to make more accurate attributions about complex stimuli than people low in AC (G. Fletcher, Reeder, & Bull, 1990; G. Fletcher, Rosanowski, Rhodes, and Lange, 1992). AC also has been found to be positively related to perspective-taking and empathy (Joireman, 2004). These findings suggest that AC could be strongly related to policy preference. It was therefore important to show that scores on the ASO-L make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of attitudes towards school reform initiatives over and above what can be accounted for by scores on the ACS alone.

Social Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ)

Oftentimes, researchers will attempt to measure political orientation with a single item that asks participants to identify themselves as being either "liberal" or "conservative." There are two problems with this strategy. First, using only one item to measure a construct assumes that the item has perfect reliability. This assumption cannot be tested, of course, because reliability estimates cannot be computed when there is no variance, which is always the case with one-shot single-item measures. Second, measuring liberalism and conservatism with a single item assumes that they form a single, bipolar trait. Kerlinger (1984) has argued that this is a false dichotomy. To test his

theory, Kerlinger created the SAQ which treats liberalism and conservatism as qualitatively different and statistically orthogonal traits. He then subjected scores from the SAQ to exploratory factor analyses and found that very few of the items had high cross-loadings on the off-factor and that the two principle traits (i.e., liberalism and conservatism) were not statistically related to one another. Both pieces of evidence support his claim that liberalism and conservatism are distinct constructs.

Because of these advantages, the SAQ was selected as a measure of political orientation for this study (see Appendix E). The SAQ asks participants to indicate how they feel about 30 different social problems. For each social problem, participants respond using a six-point Likert-type scale that ranges from "Very Strongly Disagree" to "Very Strongly Agree." Half of the items are intended to represent "liberal" concerns (e.g., collective bargaining) and the other half are meant to represent "conservative" concerns (e.g., obedience of children). Total scores on each subscale were treated as observed variables in the structural equation models used to test the principal hypotheses because there was an insufficient sample size to treat each item as its own observed variable.

Attitudes towards school reform policies (ASRP)

In order to test whether the ASO-L is a good instrument for predicting attitudes towards school reform, I created the ASRP. The ASRP measures attitudes towards five different strategies that have been proposed for closing the Latino-White achievement gap: tracking; school finance reform; standardized testing; English-only initiatives; and parenting classes (see Appendix F). These five strategies were selected because they

frequently appear in both scholarly journals and the popular media as strategies for closing the gap.

The ASRP is comprised of 25 items (i.e., five items per subscale). Participants respond using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" with a "Neutral" midpoint. Item scores were treated as observed variables, each loading on its proposed parent factor.

Plan for analysis

Before testing the principal hypotheses, the item characteristics for the ASO-L, ASRP, SAQ, and ACS were examined. The purpose of this assessment was to ensure that the data were appropriate for maximum likelihood estimation as evidenced by the conformity of the observed distributions to a normal Gaussian curve. In the case of the ASRP, a second purpose was to identify which, if any, of the school reform policies was favored by the participants.

The next step was to test each of the research questions sequentially. The first hypothesis was tested using confirmatory factor analysis procedures to determine whether the proposed two-factor model fit the sample data. Structural equation modeling was then used to test the second hypothesis, which specified relationships between culture-blaming and structure-blaming and attitudes towards school reform. Structural equation modeling was also used to test the third hypothesis, which was that the relationships between culture-blaming and structure-blaming and school reform attitudes could not be accounted for by AC and political orientation. Finally, latent means analyses were conducted to test the fourth hypothesis that Latinos and Whites differ in their willingness

to endorse culture-blaming and structure-blaming attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap.

Chapter Four: Results

Sample characteristics

Data were collected from 800 participants, all of whom were enrolled in one or more courses offered by the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin during the Fall 2006 semester. The data from eight participants were excluded from the analyses. Of these eight, three failed to complete at least one entire page of a questionnaire, one made a diagonal pattern out of the responses, and two wrote notes on their questionnaires suggesting that they either could not or chose not to respond in a trustworthy manner. Removal of these eight participants resulted in a final sample (N= 792) that was large enough to test all of the principal hypotheses at an observation-to-estimate ratio of at least 7.7:1 (i.e., 711 observations after accounting for listwise deletion of missing cases; 92 estimates in the largest model tested). While this was not an ideal situation, Boomsma (1982) has argued that overall sample size is more important than observation-to-estimate ratio. The current study's sample greatly exceeds the 200 necessary for a "good" sample size by those standards.

Tests of differences in latent means between Whites and Latinos did not have the benefit of a similarly large sample size due to the relatively small number of Latinos who participated in the study (n= 131). However, differences in observed means could still be tested with sufficient power to detect statistical significance at an acceptable confidence level (α= .05). A decision was made to conduct both types of tests with an understanding that the estimates in the latent means analysis might be unstable given the small number of Latinos in the sample.

The demographic characteristics of the sample mirrored that of the pilot administration. This was an unsurprising finding given that both samples were drawn from the same population. Participants tended to be White, middle- to upper-middle class, female, and in either their junior or senior year of college (see Table 5).

Item and scale characteristics

ASO-L

Before answering the substantive questions, it was necessary to inspect the item characteristics to be sure that the data were appropriate for maximum likelihood estimation. The mean, skew, and kurtosis of the items, as well as the mean and variance of each scale, appear in Table 6. All of the items from both the structure-blaming and culture-blaming subscales had a slight positive bias. However, since none of the items had skew greater than three or kurtosis greater than 10, there was no need to correct for non-normality (Hu, Bentler & Kano, 1992; Kline, 1998).

ASRP

Similar results were found for the Attitudes towards School Reform Policies (ASRP) scale. Respondents favored the positive end of the scale on most of the items, but all estimates of item skew and kurtosis were within acceptable boundaries (see Table 7). The ASRP data were also subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate whether the 25 items conformed to the proposed orthogonal five-factor model (see Figure 3). Both the chi-square statistic ($\chi^2(275, N= 785)= 1270.02, p< .01$) and the fit indices (SRMR= .123; RMSEA= .068) suggested poor fit. A follow-up examination of the five subscale covariance matrices revealed that the items designed to measure attitudes towards tracking were only weakly related to one another. Furthermore, the five-item

Table 5: Sample Characteristics (Full administration)

Demographic	Count	Percentage
Race		
White	523	66.0%
Latino(a)	131	16.5%
Asian/Asian American	81	10.2%
Black	21	2.7%
Native American	10	1.3%
Multiracial	14	1.8%
Sex		
Female	627	79.2%
Male	164	20.7%
Social Class		
Upper class	7	0.9%
Upper middle class	69	8.7%
Middle class	241	30.4%
Lower middle class	394	49.7%
Working class	64	8.1%
Lower class	8	1.0%
Class Status		
Freshman	43	5.4%
Sophomore	68	8.6%
Junior	200	25.3%
Senior	454	57.3%
Graduate student or other	25	3.2%

N=792

Table 6: Item Characteristics of the ASO-L

Item	Mean	Skew	Kurtosis
Culture-blaming			
Home stimulation	3.88	-0.92	0.29
No responsibility	3.53	-0.53	-0.34
Parental values	3.58	-0.58	-0.64
Home environment	3.59	-0.62	-0.37
Hard work	3.58	-0.63	-0.35
Role model	3.74	-0.80	0.21
Scale mean= 21.87			
Scale variance= 5.15			
Structure-blaming			
Bad curriculum	3.50	-0.67	-0.30
Not challenged	3.64	-0.65	-0.13
Few resources	4.11	-1.10	1.53
Large classes	3.25	-0.21	-0.68
Bad counselors	3.12	-0.13	-0.85
Underestimate potential	3.79	-0.75	-0.03
Scale mean= 21.41			
Scale variance= 4.32			

Note: Higher scores correspond to higher levels of perceived importance

Table 7: Item Characteristics of the ASR

Item	Mean	Skew	Kurtosis
Resource redistribution			
Spend money	3.29	-0.22	1.14
Increase funding	3.50	-0.54	-0.55
Fund Latino schools	2.20	0.59	-0.41
Government funding	4.04	-1.14	1.41
Pay more taxes	2.49	0.35	-0.75
Scale Mean* = 12.41			
Scale Variance= 4.03			
English only			
English during the day	3.10	-0.10	-1.23
English closes gap	3.37	-0.52	-0.83
Improve understanding	3.39	-0.44	-0.80
English in class	3.36	-0.46	-0.69
Scale Mean= 13.22			
Scale Variance= 3.98			
Parent education			
Learn school's goals	3.61	-0.64	-0.15
Take an interest	3.09	-0.17	-0.72
Parental involvement	3.62	-0.66	0.00
School matters	3.71	-0.74	0.43
Scale Mean= 14.00			
Scale Variance= 3.51			
Standardized testing			
Same pace	2.91	-0.13	1.13
Same material	3.45	-0.76	-0.34
Same test score	3.45	-0.53	-0.75
Test improves teaching	3.38	-0.44	-0.80
Scale Mean= 13.17			
Scale Variance= 3.75			

*- Raw scale mean was multiplied by 0.8 to scale it to a four-item mean
Note: Higher scores correspond to higher levels of perceived importance

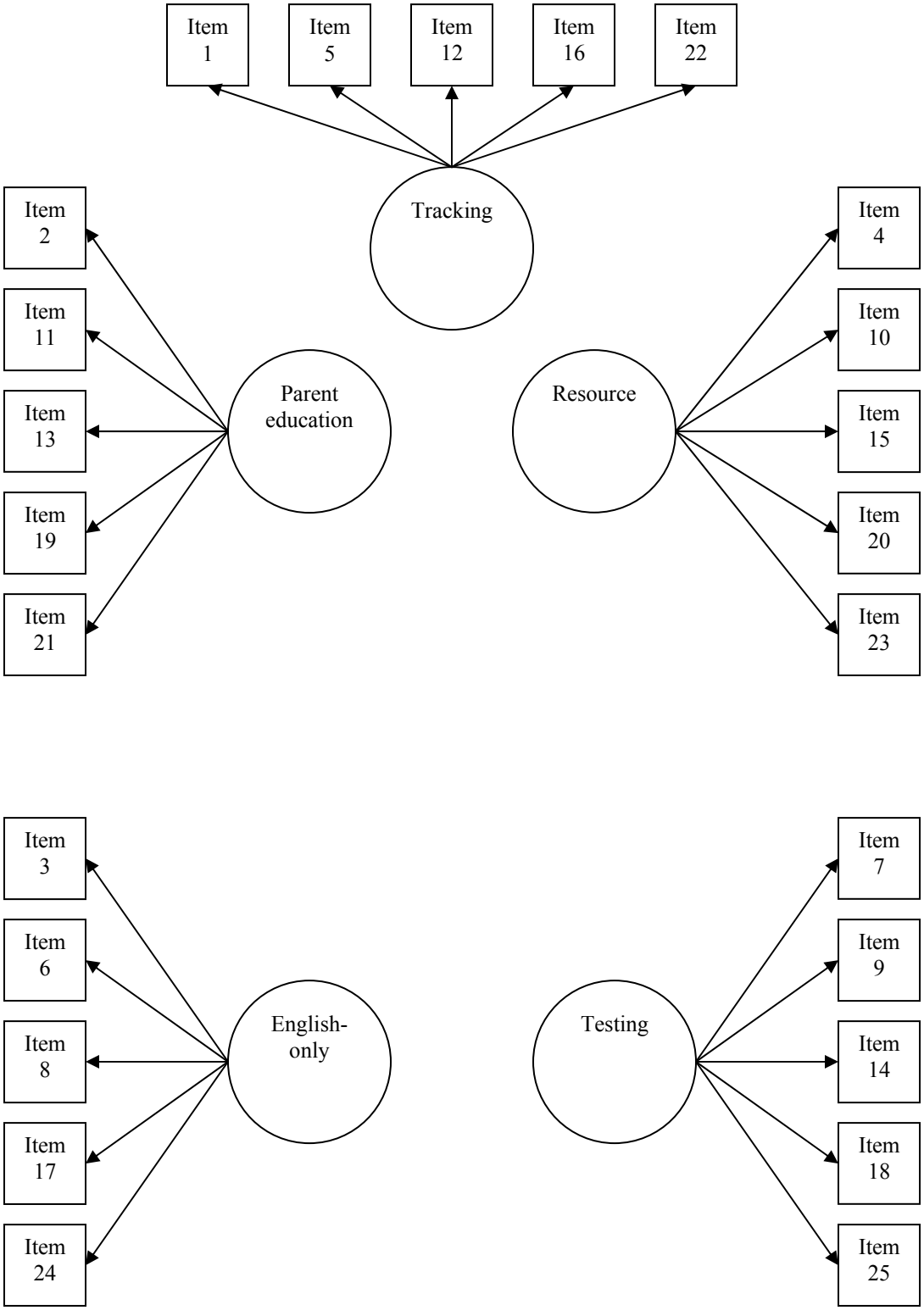

Figure 3: Proposed Five-Factor Model of School Reform Attitudes

subscale had a rather unimpressive internal consistency estimate (α= .63) and eliminating any of the items would have resulted in even lower reliability. As a result, the tracking subscale was removed from the model and excluded from subsequent analyses.

Unfortunately, removing the tracking subscale while keeping the other subscales intact did not produce a good-fitting model (χ^2(170, *N*= 787)= 883.14, *p*< .01; SRMR= .124; RMSEA= .073). In an attempt to improve model fit, one item each from English-only, parent education, and standardized testing subscales was eliminated based on the items' bivariate correlations with the other items in its respective subscale and the size of its standardized factor loading. No items were dropped from the resource redistribution subscale because all of the items appeared to be functioning well. This revised four-factor, seventeen-predictor model also had poor fit (χ^2(119, *N*= 788)= 575.956, *p*< .01; SRMR= .118; RMSEA= .070).

In order to salvage the subscales, the four factors were allowed to covary. Theoretically, the factors should be uncorrelated except for what is explained by their relationship with the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits. However, since the model of substantive interest was one that allows the ASO-L traits to explain this relationship, the ASRP factors were allowed to covary. This produced a model with sufficiently good fit (χ^2(113, *N*= 788)= 356.53, *p*< .01; SRMR=.042; RMSEA= .052) and score reliability (resource redistribution α= .77; English-only α= .81; parent education α= .86; standardized testing α= .76) to permit tests of the research questions (see Figure 4 and Table 8).

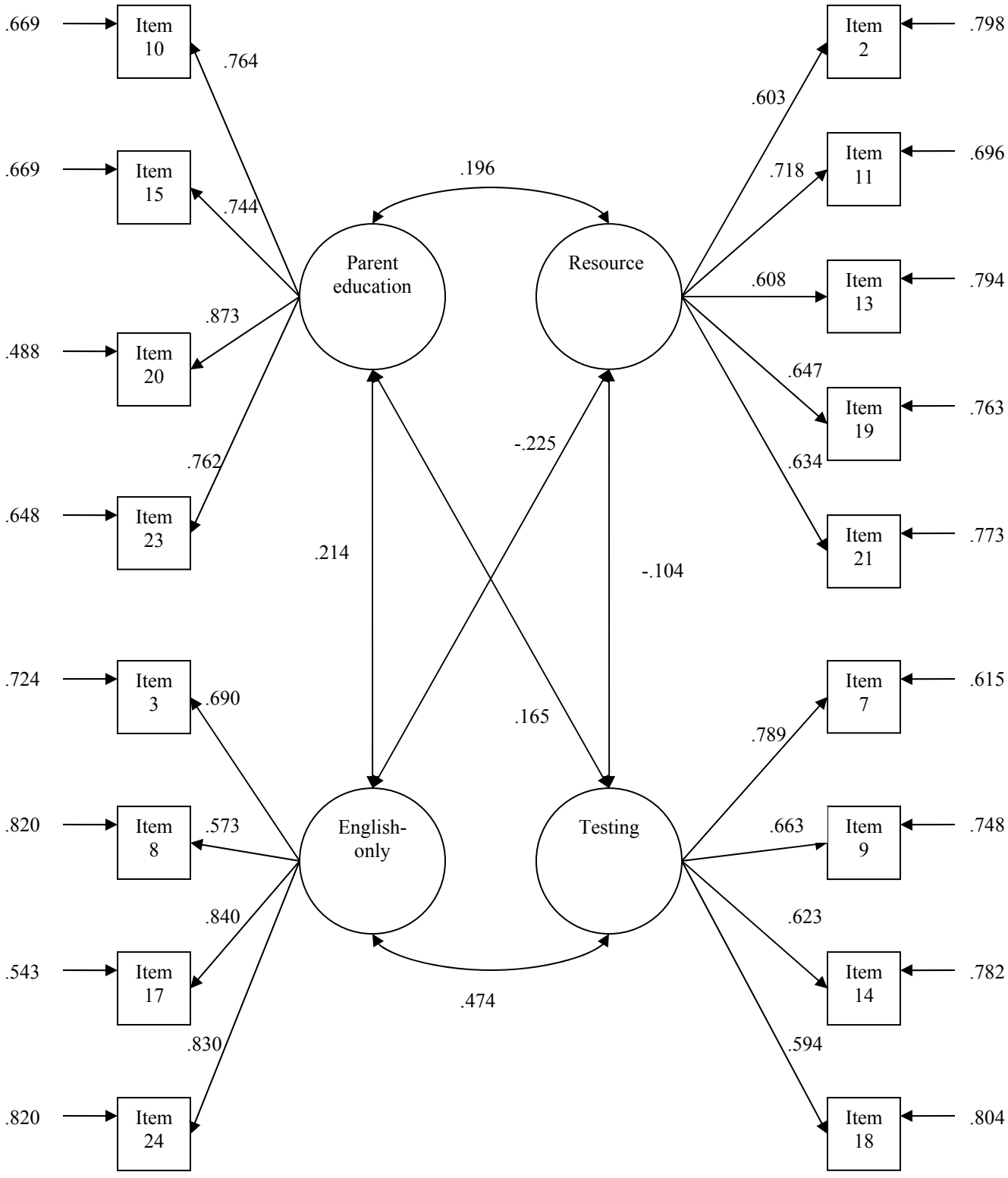

Figure 4: Final Model for the ASR with Standardized Path Values

Table 8: Item Wording for Figure 4

Item #	Wording of the actual item
Parent Education	
10	Parenting classes should be offered to Latino parents to teach them how to support the educational goals of the school
15	Parenting classes would bring Latino up to par with White parents in terms of taking an interest in how their child is doing in school
20	Parenting classes would help Latino parents realize that they need to get involved with their child's education
23	Latino parents stand to benefit from classes designed to teach them how much schooling matters in today's society
Resource redistribution	
2	The state should spend as much money as it takes to make sure that Latino students achieve equally with Whites
11	The best way to achieve equal outcomes is to increasing funding for schools that serve mainly Latino students
13	Schools that serve mostly Latino students should be given more money than schools that serve mainly White students
19	The government needs to give schools that serve Latino students the funding they need
21	People should pay more taxes to make sure that schools that serve Latino students have the resources they need

English-only

3	Schools have a responsibility to make sure that students speak English at all times during the school day
8	Latino students will not achieve equally with Whites until they learn to speak English properly
17	Latino students should be forced to speak English so that they can understand what the teacher is trying to tell them
24	Schools could help Latinos quite a bit by making sure that they only speak English in class

Standardized testing

7	Standardized testing makes sure that Latino students are learning at the same pace as White students
9	Standardized testing makes sure that Latino students are learning the same material as White students
14	Closing the gap between Latino students and White students requires making both groups achieve the same standardized test score in order to pass to the next grade
18	Holding students to high standards on standardized tests motivates teachers to do a better job of teaching all students

Next, the subscales were examined to determine overall policy preferences. A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to assess whether participants favored any of the school reform strategies over the others. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the means of the four outcome variables ($F_{(2.70,787)}$= 29.61, p< .01). Follow-up paired-sample *t*-tests using Bonferroni's correction to control for Type I error revealed that parent education was the favorite strategy overall. Participants preferred it to standardized testing (t(790)= 4.92; p< .01), English-only initiatives (t(790)= 4.68; p< .01), and resource redistribution (t(789)= 10.29; p< .01). Of the remaining three strategies, resource redistribution was liked the least. Participants expressed more positive attitudes towards English-only initiatives (t(788)= 4.19; p< .01) and standardized testing (t(788)= 4.10; p< .01) than towards resource redistribution. The difference in attitudes towards standardized testing and English-only initiatives was not statistically significant (t(789)= .36; p= .72).

Mediators

The Social Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) and the Attributional Complexity Scale (ACS) were not intended to be part of the scale development process since they had already been subjected to evaluation by other researchers (G. Fletcher et al., 1986; Kerlinger, 1984). However, the distribution of scores on both instruments warrants discussion. Respondents indicated that they felt almost all of the social issues on the SAQ were of significant importance, which meant that nearly everyone scored high on both liberalism and conservatism. Although at the item level this could have produced problems with non-normality, the summed scores did not violate commonly accepted

standards of skew and kurtosis (skew= -.90; kurtosis= 2.79; Hu, Bentler & Kano, 1992; Kline, 1998).

Unfortunately, high missingness may have affected the interpretability of the scores. Nearly 10 percent (*n*= 75; 9.4%) of the respondents failed to answer at least one of the items on the SAQ. One item, which asked participants about the importance of collective bargaining, was skipped 19 times (2.4%), most likely because respondents were unsure of what the term meant. None of the items on the ASO-L, ASRP, or ACS was even close to that level of missingness. Because the overall missingness across scales was approximately 10 percent (*n*= 81), and because of the possibility that missingness could have been correlated with one or more of the variables in the model, the validity of the scores may have been adversely affected. However, since the degree of missingness was very low when the SAQ was not included in the analyses (*n*= 6), most of the model testing not subjected to this threat.

The ACS produced higher quality data. Like the ASRP and SAQ, participants displayed a positive bias, which corresponds to a preference for attributionally complex as opposed to attributionally simple explanations (skew= .48; kurtosis= .61). A factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed that the first factor was the only one to have an eigenvalue greater than one, a finding that is consistent with previous research on the ACS (G. Fletcher et al, 1986).

In an ideal scenario, all of the items from both the SAQ and ACS would have been included in the full structural model. Approaching the analyses in this way would have allowed for a purer measure of the latent traits. However, due to the large number of

items making up the SAQ and ACS, it was impossible to treat liberalism, conservatism, and attributional complexity as latent traits each with their own predictor variables and still maintain a sufficiently high observation-to-estimate ratio. Therefore, composite scores were computed for each of the three scales and entered into the models as observed variables.

Analysis of Research Questions

Analysis of Research Question #1: What are the primary explanatory types that characterize reasoning about the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap?

The results of the pilot study indicated that a model with two correlated factors fit the data well. Based on the characteristics of the retained items, it appeared as though the labels "culture-blaming" and "structure-blaming" were appropriate descriptors for the latent traits. The full administration provided another opportunity to evaluate the performance of these items, as well to explore the possibility of more fully covering the content domain through the addition of new items.

A model containing 20 indicator variables loading on two factors (see Figure 5) did not have good fit ($\chi^2(169, N= 785)=1148.89$, $p< .01$; SRMR=.082; RMSEA= .086). Decisions to improve model fit by removing poorly functioning items were made based on bivariate correlations, results of the LaGrange Multiplier Test, size of the standardized factor loadings, and content domain considerations. In the case of the culture-blaming subscale, all five of the original items plus one new item ("Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior") remained in the final model (see Figure 6 and Table 9). The same was not the

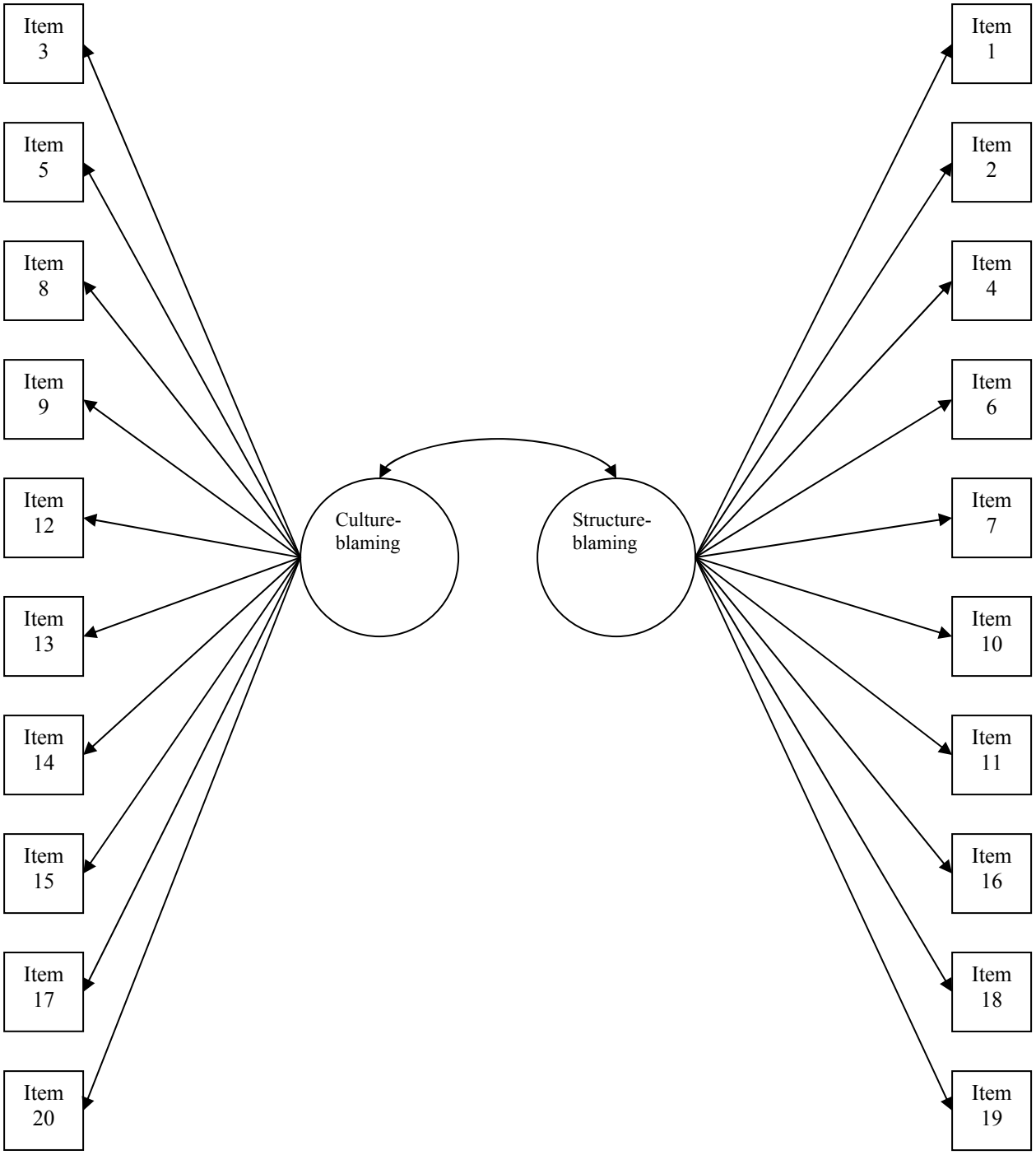

Figure 5: Proposed Two-Factor Model for the ASO-L

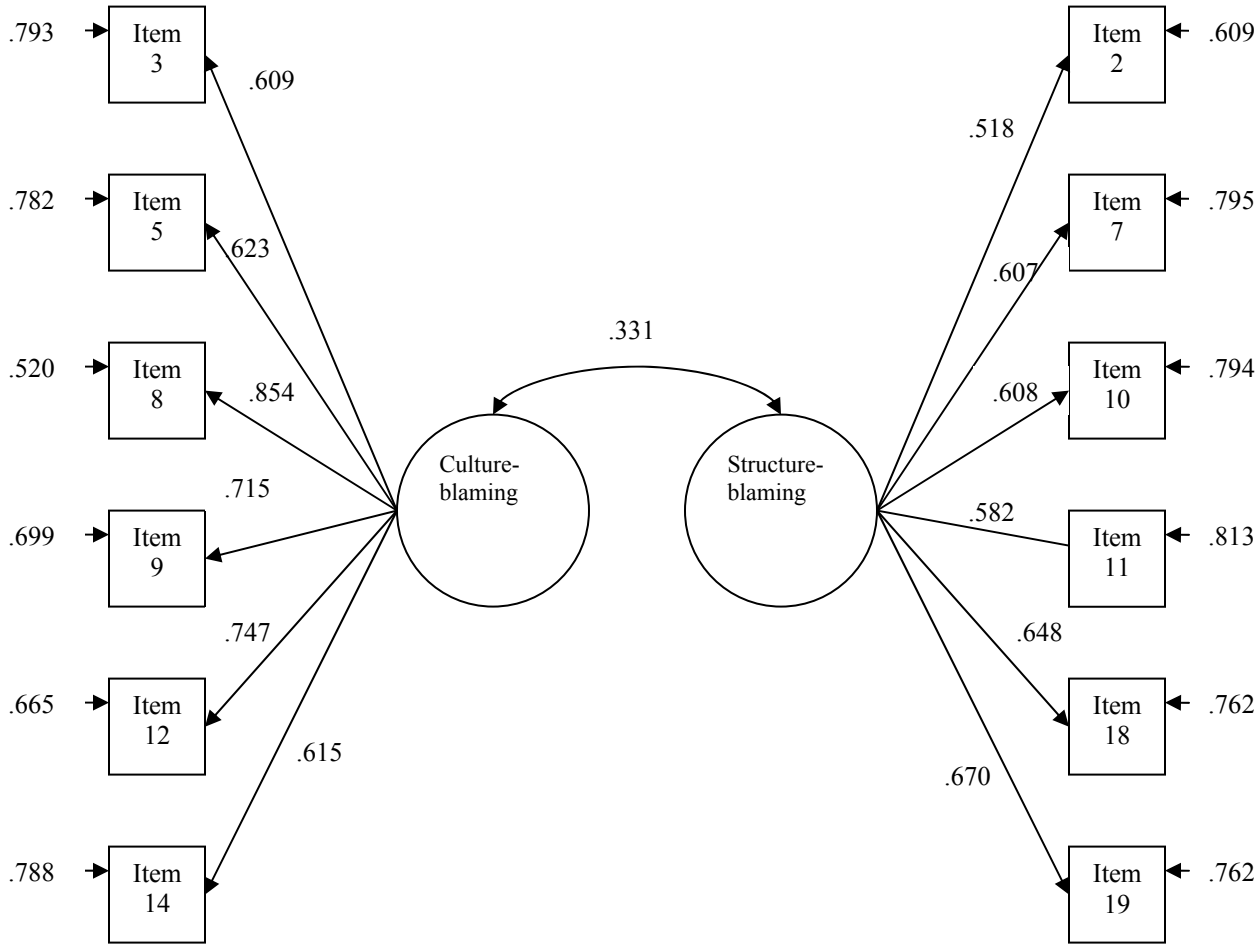

Figure 6: Final Two-Factor Model for the ASO-L

Table 9: Item Wording for Figure 6

Item #	Wording of the actual item
Culture-blaming	
3	Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students
5	Latino students are less likely to take responsibility for their education than White students
8	Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents
9	Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family
12	White parents do a better job than Latino parents of emphasizing to their children that you have to work hard to get good grades
14	Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior
Structure-blaming	
2	The school curriculum tends to show more positive images of White students than of Latino students
7	White students usually get placed in more challenging courses than Latino students
10	Schools with mostly Latino students tend to have fewer resources than schools with mostly White students
11	Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students
18	School counselors do not understand the needs of Latino students as much as they understand the needs of White students
19	Teachers are more likely to underestimate the potential of their Latino students than they are to underestimate the potential of their White students

case for the items making up the structure-blaming subscale. A final structure-blaming subscale made up of six items, only three of which were included in the final version of the subscale in the pilot administration, produced the best results. Combining the subscales into an oblique two-factor model resulted in good fit ($\chi^2(53, N=788)= 169.25$, $p< .01$; SRMR= .044; RMSEA= .053), and Cronbach's alpha estimates indicated that both of the resulting subscales had acceptable levels of internal consistency (culture-blaming α= .84; structure-blaming α= .77).

There are three other pieces of information that emerged from the confirmatory factor analyses that merit attention. First, standardized residuals describe how well a model recovers the original covariance matrix. As Table 10 indicates, only one standardized residual in the final model was greater than .10 and the average off-diagonal residual was only .04. This suggests that the final model did a very good job of accounting for the observed relationships among the indicator variables.

A second piece of information pertains to the proportion of variance in the indicator variables that is accounted for by each factor. Approximately 49 percent of the variance in the items in the culture-blaming subscale and 37 percent of the variance in the structure-blaming subscale was accounted for by the two-factor model. Higher values could have been achieved by selecting only those items that had the highest factor loadings, but doing so would have adversely affected the content validity of the scale.

Next, an exploratory analysis was conducted on the items that were dropped from the full administration version of the ASO-L. The four items that did not make the culture-blaming subscale focused on: (1) the unwillingness of Latino students to speak English; (2) problems in

Table 10: Standardized Residuals (Full administration of the ASO-L)

	Curr.	Home stim.	No resp.	Not chal.	Parental values	H/S conflict	Fewer resources	Large classes	Hard work	No models	Bad counselors	Misjudge potential
Curriculum												
Home stimulation	.078											
No responsibility	-.051	.051										
Not challenged	.006	.118	.094									
Parental values	-.089	-.005	.000	.037								
H/S conflict	-.043	-.027	-.040	.033	.027							
Fewer resources	-.005	.093	-.049	.005	-.014	.008						
Large classes	-.012	.001	-.065	.035	-.069	-.040	.078					
Hard work	-.088	-.040	.021	.002	.008	-.019	-.029	-.020				
No role models	-.010	.034	-.022	.042	-.038	.019	.068	.026	.032			
Bad counselors	.000	.080	.020	-.026	.010	.016	-.058	-.006	-.001	.097		
Misjudge potential	.026	.085	-.016	-.025	-.031	-.032	-.005	-.063	-.032	.086	.061	

the home that make Latino students do poorly in school; (3) social problems that make Latino students start behind in school; and (4) the inability of teachers to reach Latino students. Since all four of these items appeared to be related to a more distal level of culture- blaming than the ones that remained in the final scale, there was reason to believe that they might form a third factor.

A confirmatory factor analysis evaluating the statistical plausibility of these four items loading on a single factor produced a non-significant chi-square ($\chi^2(2, N= 787)= 1.74, p= .42$) and excellent SRMR (.010) and RMSEA (.000) values (see Figure 7 and Table 11). The reliability estimate was fairly low ($\alpha= .68$), but considering that Cronbach's alpha is affected by the number of items in a scale, the estimate was not unreasonably bad.

Including this third factor in a model with culture-blaming and structure-blaming produced favorable results ($\chi^2(101, N= 786)= 519.50, p< .01$; SRMR= .060; RMSEA= .073); However, the correlations between this new factor and culture-blaming ($r= .79$) and structure-blaming ($r= .59$) were very high. As evidenced by the initial stage of model testing, grouping the items associated with this third factor with those already on the culture-blaming subscale resulted in poor fit. On the other hand, keeping the items as a separate factor would have increased the risk that collinearity would adversely the estimation procedure in subsequent structural equation analyses while not necessarily adding any theoretical value. Therefore, because the items loading on the culture-blaming factor are more closely related to "culture-blaming" than are the items that were dropped, the original two-factor model was retained.

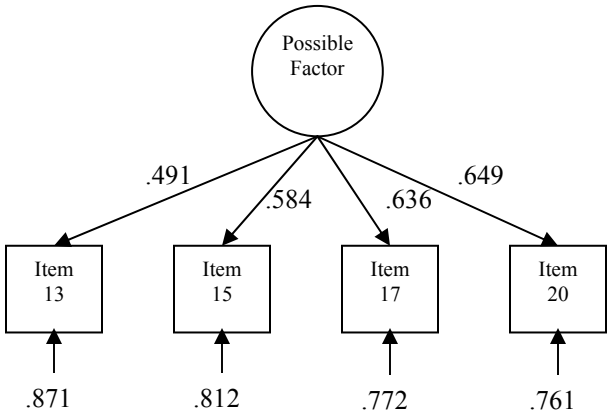

Figure 7: Possible Third Factor Related to Culture-Blaming

Table 11: Item Wording for Figure 7

Item #	Wording of the actual item
13	Latino students choose to speak Spanish rather than learning the language of the school
15	Schools just can't overcome all of the problems Latino students bring with them from home
17	It is hard for teachers to reach Latino children
20	Latino students come to school so far behind that is hard for schools to help them catch up to where White students of their same age are

Similar analyses were conducted on the four items that were dropped from the final version of the structure-blaming subscale. The items pertaining to the following items were set to load on a single factor: (1) racial discrimination; (2) the greater likelihood of Latino students getting bad teachers; (3) the greater likelihood of Latino students getting bad schools; and (4) the limited availability of technology at Latino schools (see Figure 8 and Table 12).

Results suggested that the items most likely did not comprise one factor ($\chi^2(2, N=791)= 25.75$, $p < .01$; SRMR= .043; RMSEA= .123; Cronbach's $\alpha= .59$). Furthermore, as was the case with the items dropped from the culture-blaming subscale, there was a statistically significant relationship between the new factor and the structure-blaming factor ($r= .35$) when it was added to the full model. Because this new factor lacked a clear conceptual identity, and because the original model described culture-blaming and structure-blaming more precisely than the three-factor model would have, the original two-factor model was retained once again.

In summary, a two-factor model containing six indicators per subscale fit the data well. Scores on the items contained within each subscale had acceptable internal consistency and the relationships among the items were explained well by the two-factor model as evidenced by the relatively small standardized residuals. Finally, the model had good fit without the addition of correlated error terms, thus making the interpretation of subscale scores less ambiguous.

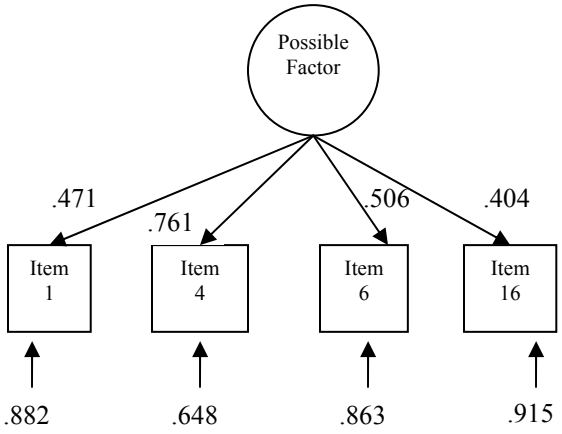

Figure 8: Possible Third Factor Related to Structure-Blaming

Table 12: Item Wording for Figure 8

Item #	Wording of the actual item
1	Latino students have a greater chance than White students of getting bad teachers
4	The schools that Latinos attend are not as good as the schools Whites attend
6	Schools with mostly White students tend to have better technology than schools with mostly Latino students
16	Latino students are more likely to face racial discrimination than are White students

Analysis of Research Question 2: Are these traits related to preferences for how to ameliorate the Latino-White achievement gap?

The culture-blaming and structure-blaming factors were included in a structural equation model as predictors of the factors representing attitudes towards resource redistribution, English-only, parent education, and standardized testing. The chi-square statistic associated with this model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(362, N= 784)= 857.61$, $p< .01$), but the SRMR (.043) and RMSEA (.042) values were good.

More important information about the value of the culture-blaming and structure-blaming subscales in predicting attitudes towards school reform strategies can be found by examining the statistical significance, size, and direction of the path coefficients. The direct effects of the culture-blaming and structure-blaming factors on attitudes towards resource redistribution were statistically significant and in the expected direction—that is, low scores on culture-blaming and high scores on structure-blaming were associated with positive attitudes towards resource redistribution (see Table 13). In total, the model explained approximately half (49.8%) of the variance in attitudes towards resource redistribution.

The ASO-L did not fare equally well in predicting scores on the other three outcome variables. While all of the path coefficients were statistically significant, the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits only accounted for 14, 21, and nine percent of the variance in attitudes towards English-only initiatives, parent education classes, and standardized testing respectively.

Table 13: Direct effects of ASO-L Variables on the Four Outcome Variables

	Endogenous variable			
Causal variable	Resource Redistribution	English-only	Parent education	Standardized testing
Culture-blaming	-.315*	.332*	.436*	.235*
Structure-blaming	.746*	-.310*	.066	-.280*

* $p < 0.05$

Analysis of Research Question 3: *Are the relationships between the ASO-L constructs (i.e., culture-blaming and structure-blaming) and school reform attitudes explained by attributional complexity (AC) and political orientation?*

A model was specified in which culture-blaming and structure-blaming were set to predict AC, conservatism, liberalism, and the four factors representing school reform attitudes (χ^2(446, *N*= 711)= 1113.81, *p*< .01; SRMR= .049; RMSEA= .046). The paths from AC, conservatism, and liberalism to the outcome variables were constrained to be zero (see Figure 9). This "restricted" model represented the baseline model that could be compared against a "full" model that was identical to the restricted model except that AC and the two political orientation variables were freed to predict scores on the four attitudes measures (Figure 10). If the relationship between ASO-L scores and the four outcome variables could be accounted for by AC and political orientation, the full model chi-square would be statistically significantly lower than the restricted model chi-square and the direct effects of culture-blaming and structure-blaming on attitudes towards the school reform strategies would be statistically non-significant once AC, liberalism, and conservatism were allowed to predict school reform attitudes. In other words, the only relationship that ASO-L scores would have with the school reform attitudes would be through the mediators.

The full model produced a statistically significant chi-square (χ^2(434, *N*= 711)= 1037.20, *p*< .01), but acceptable SRMR (.045) and RMSEA (.044) values (see Figure 11). However, freeing the paths from AC, liberalism, and conservatism to the outcome variables did result in comparatively better fit than the restricted model ($\Delta\chi^2$(12, *N*=711)=

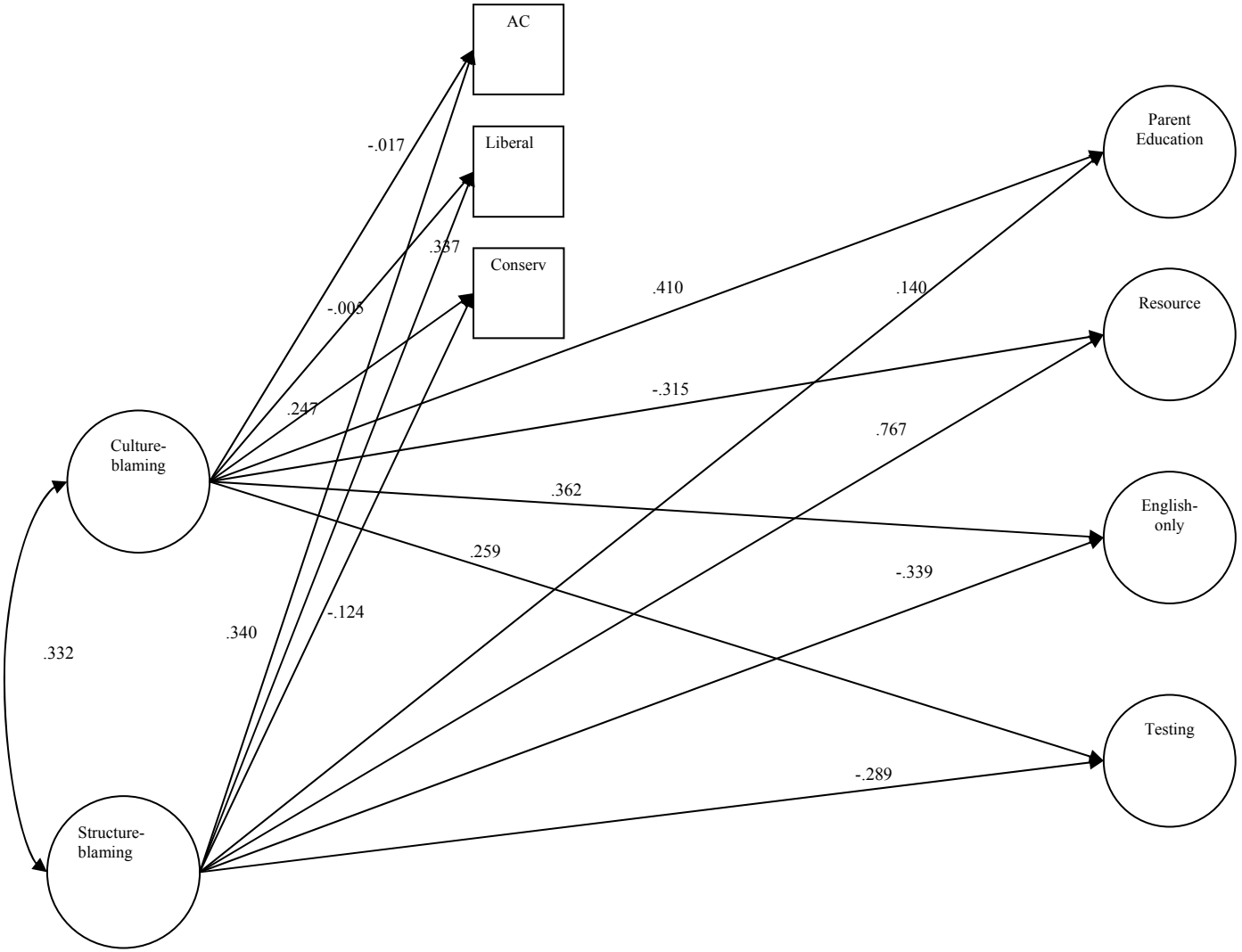

Figure 9: Structural Portion of the Restricted Model

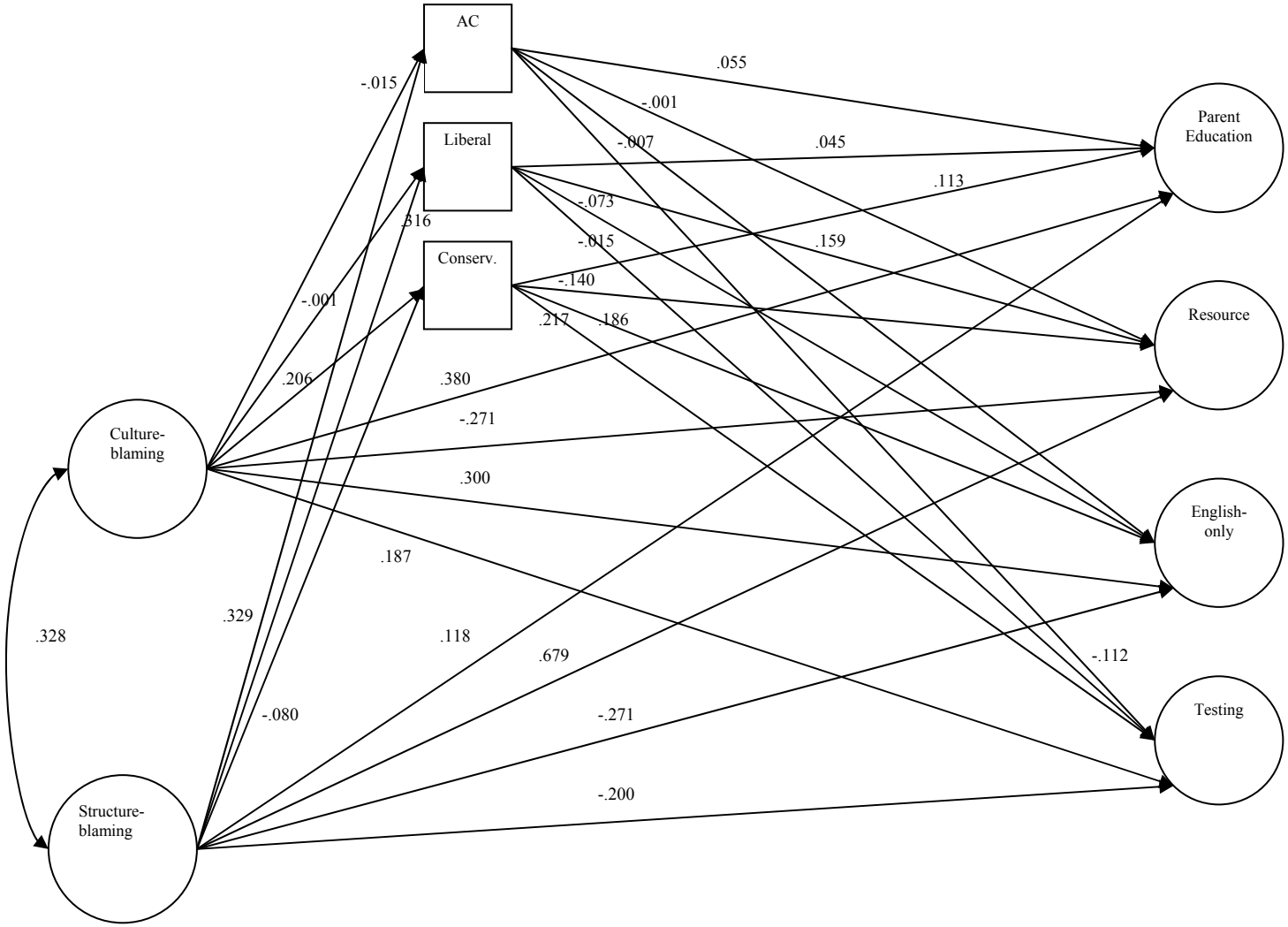

Figure 10: Structural Portion of the Full Model

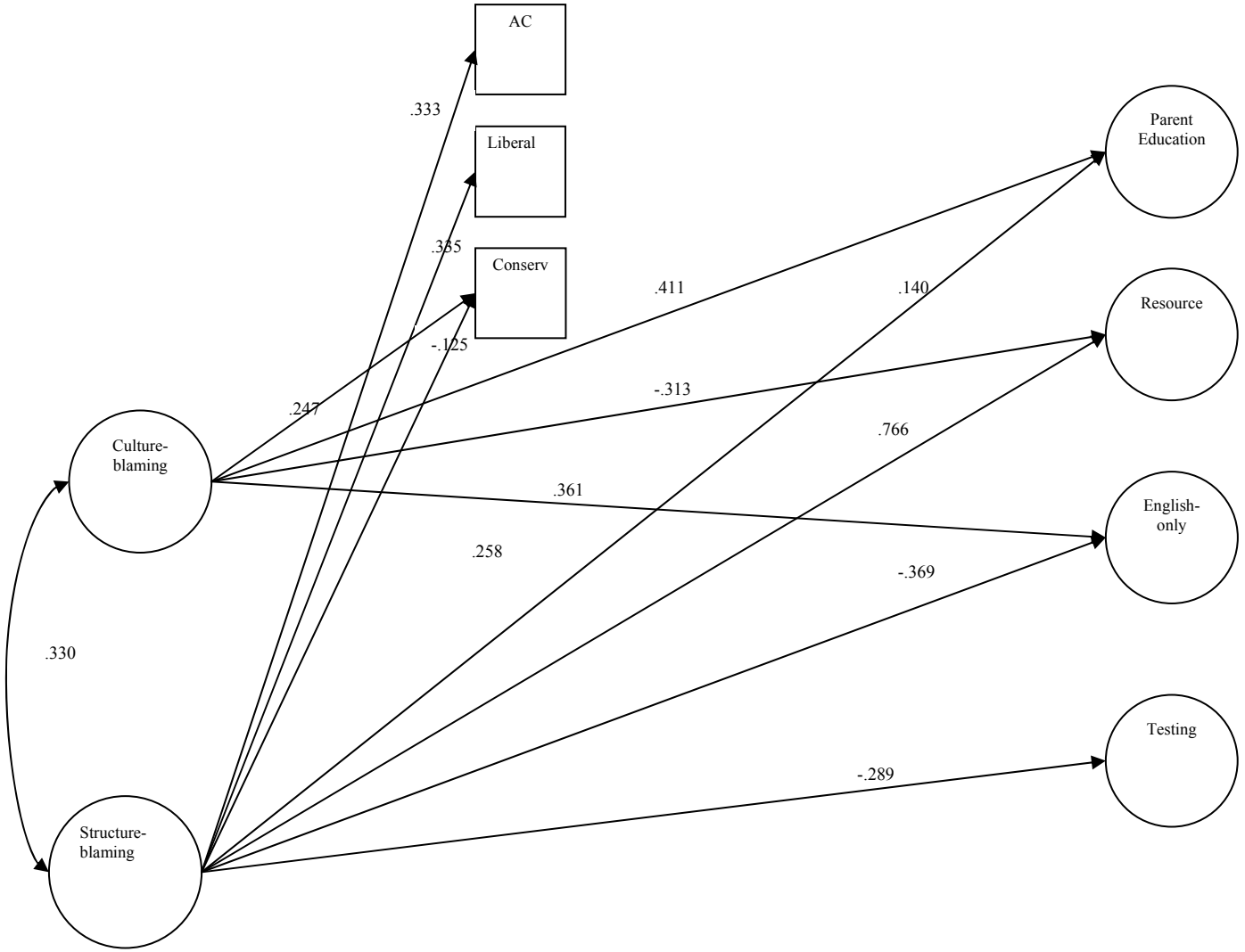

Figure 11: Structural Portion of the Final Model

76.61, $p < .01$). Although this would seem to suggest that AC and political orientation do have an impact on model fit, it is important to recall that sample size influences chi-square significance testing. This is significant given that all of the direct effects of culture-blaming and structure-blaming on school reform attitudes that were statistically significant in the restricted model remained statistically significant and in the same direction in the full model. This suggests that culture-blaming and structure-blaming are related to attitudes towards the school reform strategies over and above what is accounted for by political orientation and AC, even though adding the mediators does result in a slightly better fitting model. A summary of effects for the final model appears in Table 14.

It was also possible to investigate the relationship between the ASO-L factors and scores on the SAQ and ACS. Conservatism was found to be positively related to culture-blaming and negatively related to structure-blaming. Liberalism, on the other hand, was positively correlated with structure-blaming, but had a statistically non-significant relationship with culture-blaming. Similarly, AC was associated with high scores on structure-blaming and had a statistically non-significant relationship with culture-blaming.

Analysis of Research Question 4: Are there differences between Latinos and Whites in terms of their preference for cultural and structural attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap?

T-tests performed on subscale scores revealed no statistically significant differences between Latinos and White in terms of their willingness to endorse culture-

.

Table 14: Summary of Effects in the Final Structural Equation Model

	Endogenous variable						
Causal variable	Parent Education	Resource Redistribution	English-only	Standardized testing	ACS	Liberal	Conservative
Culture-Blaming Direct Effect	.411*	-.313*	.361*	.258*	----	-----	.247*
Structure-blaming Direct Effect	.140*	.766 *	-.369*	-.289*	.333*	.335*	-.125*

*- p< .01

blaming attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap ($t(651)= .127$; $p= .899$). Differences did exist, however, in terms of structure-blaming with Latinos being more likely than Whites to blame the schooling system for the Latino-White achievement gap ($t(254)= 2.50$; $p< .01$).

An unexpectedly large sample size permitted an exploratory comparison of latent means between Latinos and Whites. The primary advantage of conducting latent means analyses as opposed to traditional *t*-tests is that the groups are compared in terms of the "error-free" trait rather than composite scores, which contain both true variance and error variance. In order to justify the use of a latent means analysis, however, the ASO-L had to be shown to be invariant across racial/ethnic groups. Otherwise, the scales could be measuring entirely different constructs, or measuring the same constructs differently, for each group. A summary of findings at each step of the invariance testing procedure appears at the end of this section (see Table 15).

The first step was to test for configural invariance. Identical models were specified for each group with the all of the items set to load on their parent factors. The factor loadings for the same two items ("Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family" and "Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students") were set to one in both groups in order to scale their respective factors. The model for the White sample had a significant chi-square value ($\chi^2(53, N= 520)= 110.38$, $p< .01$), but acceptable values on the SRMR (.041) and RMSEA (.046). The Latino model produced a statistically significant chi-square ($\chi^2(53, N=131)= 88.61$, $p< .01$) and an RMSEA (.072) that was out of range for what is often considered "good" fit

However, since the latent means analysis was exploratory, and because the SRMR value was good (.080) and the RMSEA value was "adequate" (RMSEA< .10; Hu & Bentler, 1999), the process of testing for stricter forms of invariance was allowed to proceed.

Next, a baseline model was specified. In this model, all of the proposed item-factor relationships were identical for the Latino and White samples, but no constraints were added. The purpose of running the same model for both groups in the same analysis was to produce a chi-square that could be compared against a subsequent model in which constraints were imposed. A confirmatory factor analysis performed on this model produced a statistically significant chi-square (χ^2(106, N=651= 198.99; p< .01) along with low SRMR (.063) and RMSEA (.037) values.

The next step involved setting constraints on the factor loadings to ensure that the relationships between the factors and the items were identical for both groups. Failure to show this "metric" from of invariance would mean that the items were differentially driven by the latent trait in the two populations, and therefore, that the latent means would have different meanings in the two groups. Again, the model chi-square value was statistically significant (χ^2(117, N= 651)= 208.71; p< .01), although the values on both fit indices were within the range of acceptability (SRMR= .078; RMSEA= .035). Since this constrained model is nested within the completely unconstrained model, a comparison of chi-square values could be used to determine whether the constraints led to a statistically significant increase in chi-square. The resulting non-significant chi-square ($\Delta\chi^2$(11, N= 651)=9.77, p= .64) suggested that model fit was not harmed by the constraints.

The next level of invariance is referred to as "scalar invariance." A model is said to be scalar invariant if the factor loadings and intercepts are equal across groups (T. Brown, 2006). To test for this property, additional constraints were imposed to force the item intercepts to be equal in both groups. Since the factors become dependent variables in this model, the disturbances were allowed to covary to represent the relationship between the culture-blaming and structure-blaming constructs. This relationship was not constrained to be equal because constraining error variances is a stricter form of invariance than is necessary for the present purposes (Byrne, 1994). The more constrained model also produced a statistically significant chi-square ($\chi^2(126, N= 651)=226.13, p< .01$) and SRMR (.069) and RMSEA (.035) values within the acceptable range. A follow-up test on the change in chi-square resulting from the additional constraints indicated that there was a statistically significant loss in fit as a result of constraining the item intercepts ($\Delta\chi^2(9, N= 651)=17.42, p= .04$).

The constraints were inspected to see how model fit could be improved. Results of the LaGrange Multiplier Test indicated that the intercepts for the items, "White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students," "Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents," and "Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior" may be different for Latinos than for Whites. Releasing the constraint on the item "White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students" resulted in a chi-square change was no longer significant ($\Delta\chi^2(8, N= 651)= 11.88, p= .16$). No additional constraints were released.

Since the model was shown to be at least partially scalar invariant, it was possible to test for differences in latent means. This required regressing the two latent constructs on a dummy variable representing group membership with one group (i.e., Whites) serving as the reference group (see Figures 12 and 13). In this design, a statistically significant path value representing the effect of group membership on the latent trait would indicate a difference in latent means between the two groups. Results of the latent means analysis suggested that Latinos do not differ significantly from Whites with respect to their willingness to endorse culture-blaming attributions ($t(651)= .271$; $p= .79$); however, they are more willing than Whites to make structure-blaming attributions for the Latino-White achievement gap ($t(651)= 2.985$; $p< .01$; see Figure 14). Thus, the results of the latent means analyses corroborated the results of the *t*-tests of observed means.

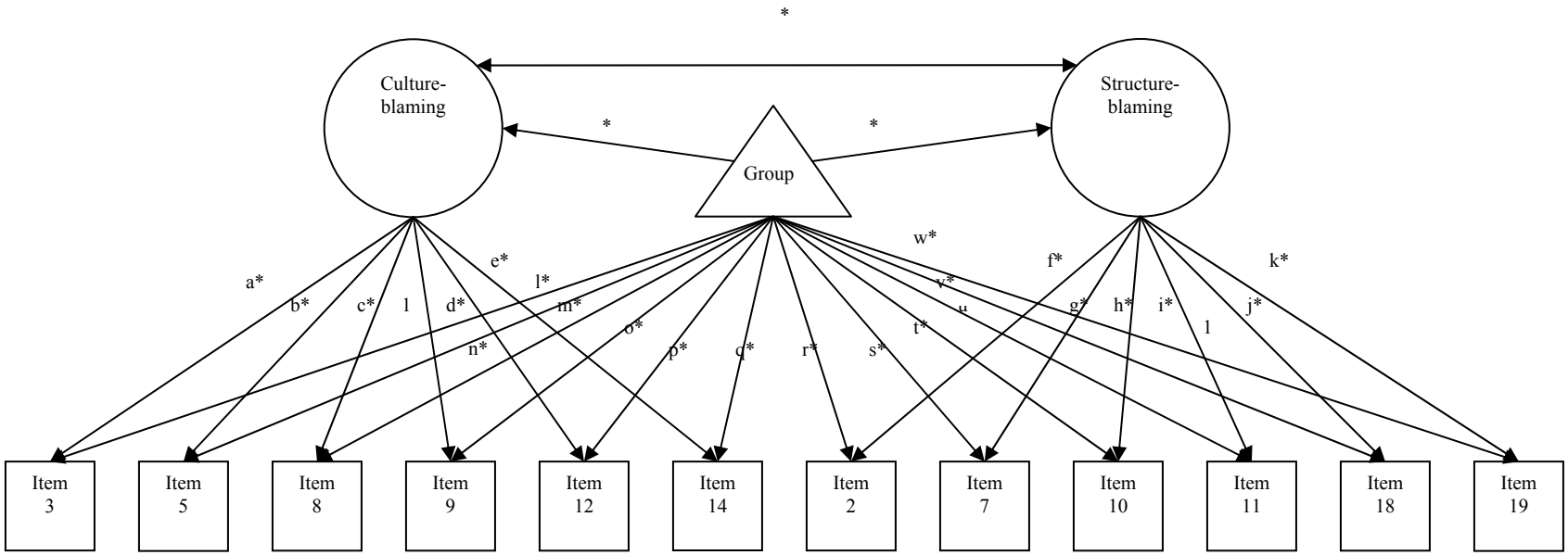

Figure 12: Latent Means Model Representing Latino Participants

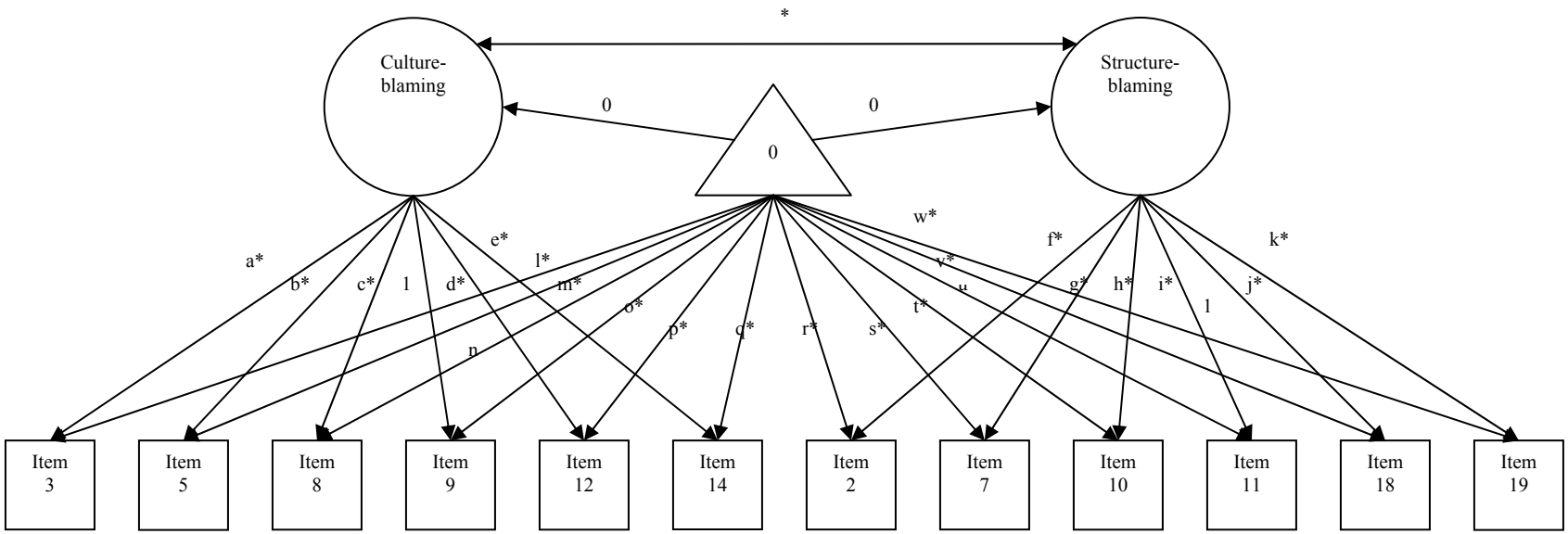

Figure 13: Latent Means Model Representing White Participants

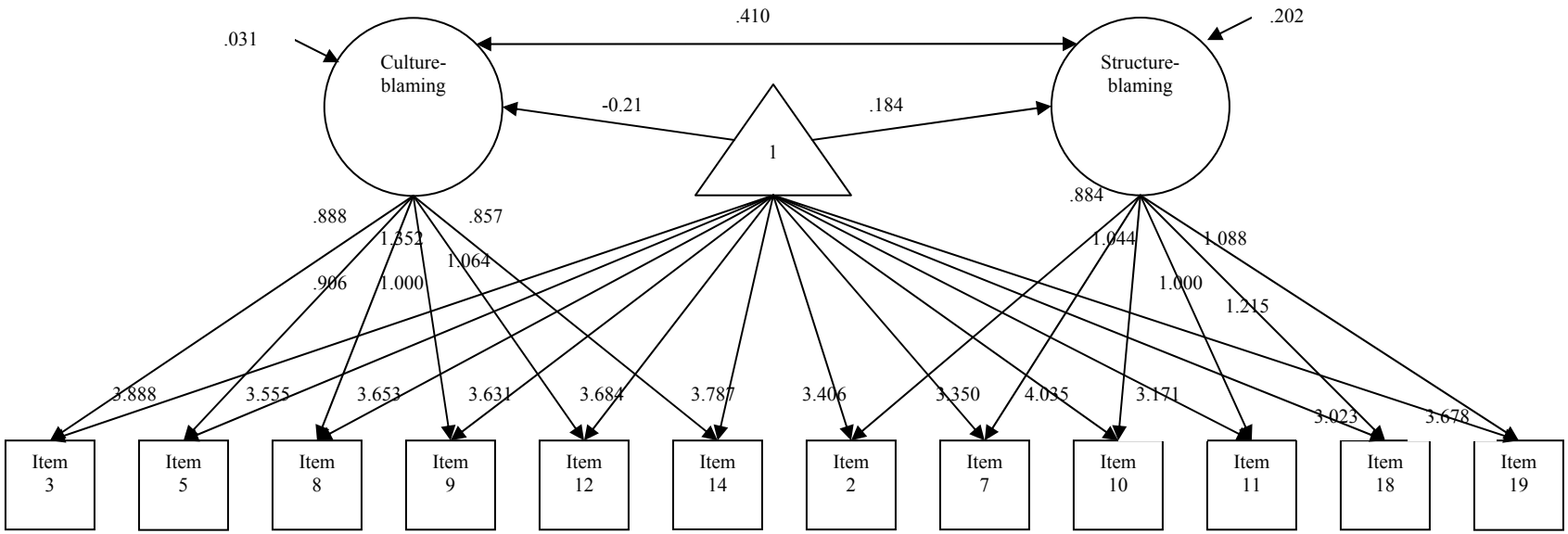

Figure 14: Latent Means Model with Unstandardized Path Values

Table 15: Results of the Tests of Measurement Invariance of the ASO-L

	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	SRMR	RMSEA
Single group solution						
Whites	110.38*	53			.041	.046
Latinos	88.61*	53			.080	.072
Measurement Invariance						
Baseline	198.99*	106			.063	.037
Metric	208.71*	117	9.72	11	.078	.035
Scalar	226.13*	126	17.42*	9	.069	.035
Scalar (revised)	220.59*	125	11.88	8	.069	.034

*- $p < .05$

Chapter Five: Discussion

The results of the study suggest that there are at least two latent traits underlying causal reasoning about the Latino-White achievement gap. Given the items comprising the final version of the ASO-L, it appears as though the traits are conceptually related to "culture-blaming" and "structure-blaming" as I have defined them. The study also demonstrated that the ASO-L can be used to predict attitudes towards resource redistribution, parent education, English-only initiatives, and standardized testing. Finally, the study showed that Latino undergraduates are more likely than White undergraduates to cite structure-blaming causes for the Latino-White achievement gap, but no less likely than White undergraduates to cite culture-blaming causes. The following sections provide a more comprehensive review of these findings and discuss possible implications for attribution research and school reform activism.

Explanations for "The Gap"

Culture-blaming

The results of this study provide insight into culture-blaming as an explanation for the Latino-White gap. Participants who scored high on culture-blaming believed that Latino parents: (1) do not create a stimulating home environment for their children; (2) fail to teach their children to take responsibility for their education; (3) devalue education; (4) emphasize the importance of family over school (5) fail to instill a respectable work ethic in their children; and (6) do not role model positive academic behavior. Each of these items speaks to the failure of Latino parents to provide the type

of encouragement and living conditions that are associated with high academic achievement.

Several of the items that were intended to measure culture-blaming had to be removed from the final version of the scale in order to achieve good model fit and it is important to consider why this was so. The items pertaining to language obstacles, Latino children's lack of academic readiness, the impact of social problems on Latino academic achievement, and the difficulties associated with reaching Latino students were all excluded from the final version of the scale. Follow-up analyses revealed that these items may be related to a more distal form of culture-blaming. From a theoretical standpoint, whereas the items that comprised the final version of the scale were primarily focused on the role of parents, those that were eliminated focused on cultural deficits that had origins outside of the family. In other words, the family was thought to be a conduit through which broader cultural factors operated. This suggests that a higher-order factor may be governing two separate lower-order factors with one lower-order factor centering on parental blame and the other centering on cultural norms that deemphasize the importance of education and schooling. Additional research, including the writing of items specifically designed to measure beliefs about cultural-level attributions, is on order to ascertain whether the culture-blaming construct is bifurcated along these lines and whether one or both of the lower order factors is useful in predicting school reform attitudes.

Structure-blaming

The results of this study also speak to structure-blaming as an explanation for the Latino-White achievement gap. The items included in the final structure-blaming subscale reflect a belief that schools have failed to meet the needs of Latino students. Respondents who scored high on structure-blaming believed that: (1) school curricula show fewer positive images of Latino children than of White children; (2) Latino students are not sufficiently challenged by their classes; (3) Latino schools have fewer resources than White schools; (4) Latino students are forced to be in classes that are excessively large; (5) counselors make poor decisions with regards to placement of Latino students; and (6) teachers underestimate the academic potential of Latino students. These items contrast with culture-blaming attributions because they place blame on schools and school personnel rather than on Latino parents.

In an effort to improve model fit, the items relating to "bad teachers," "bad schools," "racial discrimination," and "limited technology" were dropped from the structure-blaming subscale. However, with the exception of "limited technology," all of the items that were dropped were written to be fairly general in nature, so eliminating them did not appreciably reduce the coverage of the construct because the core elements of structure-blaming were still represented by the items that remained in the subscale.

The more important issue is the significant turnover in items from the pilot to the full study, which raises questions about whether the fit estimates capitalized on sampling error. Without additional cross-validation, it is impossible to know whether an entirely different combination of "optimal" items is likely to emerge each time the study is

replicated. If this scenario plays out, researchers will be left trying to identify which items will work best for their specific sample and the practicality of the scale will be severely diminished.

As mentioned previously, one reason for the instability of items may have to do with the nature of structure-blaming itself. Its tenuous state in the face of the more powerful, mainstream story of Latino academic apathy makes it a somewhat unstable system of beliefs, even among those who claim to adamantly agree with it (see Kluegel & E. R Smith, 1986). It is not surprising, then, that identifying a single set of items to cover all aspects of structure-blaming is a daunting task. Additional research on the structure-blaming attribution type is obviously necessary, but the present study does provide some initial direction for what a coherent conceptualization of the construct might eventually look like.

Another area that is ripe for additional research is determining whether people are willing to cite sociological causes that are more abstract than the ones included in the ASO-L. By definition, the fact that the schooling process leads to a differential rate of success for Latino and White students means that there are systemic factors at work. They could be cultural, school-related, sociological, or a combination of the three, but their impact on student achievement does vary by race and ethnicity. Whereas two of those attribution types were included in the study (i.e., cultural and school-related), none of the items measured the extent to which people believed that the underlying causes for the Latino-White achievement gap lie at the societal level. If given the chance, people who tend to think in terms of abstract sociological causes for educational stratification

might indicate that racism, classism, and ethnocentrism have corrupted the schooling system which, in turn, leads to differences in academic achievement along racial/ethnic lines. It should be noted, however, that even if the more abstract society-blaming attribution type were substantiated and successfully differentiated from the current structure-blaming type, it would still need to contribute to the prediction of school reform attitudes, or some other important external criterion, above and beyond what is already accounted for by the ASO-L in order to have significant practical import.

Future directions for development of the ASO-L

Structure-blaming is a counter-hegemony that locates the causes of the Latino-White achievement gap in the schooling system. Since it contrasts with the dominant ideologies of individualism, personal responsibility, and meritocracy, as well as the dominant racial ideology of color-blindness, it is not promoted in an organized way by the entities that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). Thus, it is interesting to note that the participants in this study did not favor culture-blaming explanations over structure-blaming ones. It is unclear why this was the case. It is tempting to conclude that a population of college undergraduates would be highly aware of the various ways that schools structure inequality along racial/ethnic lines; however, it seems equally likely that a form of the hedonic bias would be in effect. That is, students who are enrolled in the state's flagship university would have reason to believe that they are academically successful. Indeed, it would seem as though an academic identity would be primed by participating in a study of this type. If so, attributing academic performance to internal causes (i.e., culture-blaming) as opposed to

external causes (structure-blaming) would have been an easy way to portray one's own accomplishments in a positive light without necessarily meaning to defame lower achievers in the process. Further exploration of these factors would require additional research involving people who have achieved different levels of education.

The small, but statistically significant positive correlation between the culture-blaming and structure-blaming factors is also an intriguing finding. Despite the fact that the two traits are often described as being negatively correlated, previous research on explanations for wealth and poverty has shown that individualistic and structural attributions tend to be orthogonal (Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986). It would seem as though a preference for cognitive complexity (H. Miller & Bieri, 1965) might account for this relationship because high scores on both constructs would correspond to a need to incorporate more information into the reasoning process and low scores would correspond to a need for more efficient processing. Additional research is required to empirically test this possibility.

The response format is also in need of further assessment. Most Likert-type attitude questionnaires range from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The ASO-L differs from the norm in that it uses an "Extremely Unimportant" to "Extremely Important" format. Whereas the former style assumes that people who "agree" with an attribution also think that the attribution is important, the latter assumes that the cause is at least partially true and can therefore be of at least minimal importance. What effect this difference has on the quality of responses is unknown. Future research can compare

scores derived from each format, as well as the case in which respondents are asked to respond to the same stem using both formats.

Finally, additional assessment of the content validity of the ASO-L is clearly warranted. The current set of items is grounded in the scholarly dialogue surrounding the Latino-White achievement gap. Although this provided a solid theoretical foundation and a starting point in the item writing process, it is unreasonable to assume that all of the different types of attributions that exist in the public conversation on the Latino-White achievement gap can be derived from those sources. This is especially worrisome given that, at best, a confirmatory factor analysis only recovers factors for which items have been written. Conducting focus groups with non-academics whose sources of information are varied may help bring the constructs closer to what is actually inside the mind of the general public. If the goal is to influence public opinion by appealing to specific attributional preferences, deriving items in this way is an imperative.

School Reform Attitudes

The main purpose of the study was to develop an instrument capable of measuring people's preferences for culture-blaming and structure-blaming attributions so that policymakers could use this information to better understand how people reason about the gap. Showing that scores from the instrument could be used to predict attitudes towards various types of school reform was a critical part of this process because it provided evidence of construct validity. In addition, knowing how attributional preferences are related to school reform attitudes provides insight into why people support some strategies over others. Scholars and political activists hoping to influence public opinion

may be able to use this information to frame their initiatives in the most appealing manner possible.

Mediators

In order to demonstrate that the ASO-L was not simply measuring constructs that are already being measured by existing instruments, attributional complexity (AC) and political orientation were treated as mediators in a structural equation model. The study showed that inclusion of AC and political orientation did not entirely account for the relationships between the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits and school reform attitudes suggesting that the ASO-L does provide information over and above what is measured by these instruments.

What's more, culture-blaming and structure-blaming were found to be related to AC and political orientation in the expected direction. Whereas structure-blaming was associated with high AC and being liberal and negatively associated with being conservative, culture-blaming was associated with being conservative. Each of these findings supports the research hypotheses.

That culture-blaming was not also negatively associated with being liberal might have to do with the distinction between what Janet Helms' (1990) has referred to as "pseudo-independent" and "autonomous" racial identities. People who emanate from a pseudo-independent perspective tend to attribute social stratification to problems with the social structure, but they believe that the solution is to assimilate racial/ethnic minorities into the dominant mainstream culture. "Autonomous" Whites also believe that there are problems with the social structure, but they see the solution more in terms of building a

new, non-racist social structure as opposed to tinkering with the existing one (e.g., increasing welfare benefits incrementally) or trying to change the ways of racial/ethnic minorities. The measure of political orientation used in the present study may have identified both pseudo-independent and autonomous types as being liberal, but the two groups differed enough in their agreement with culture-blaming items to nullify a statistically significant relationship between political orientation and culture-blaming. Future research should incorporate a more sensitive measure of political orientation along with a measure of racial identity so that these two qualitatively different orientations are not confounded.

Tracking

It was hypothesized that tracking would be positively correlated with culture-blaming and negatively correlated with structure-blaming. Unfortunately, poor model fit and low reliability estimates precluded the testing of these hypotheses. Even though it could not be tested here, there is still reason to believe that people who prefer internal (i.e., culture-blaming) attributions would be in favor of tracking as a logical response to the differences in ability that students bring to bear. On the other hand, those who favor structure-blaming would most likely be opposed tracking because it does little to change the school structure or provide a more level playing field for Latinos. Although this makes intuitive sense, additional research utilizing a better tracking subscale is necessary to empirically test these hypotheses.

Resource redistribution

It was hypothesized that scores on the resource redistribution measure would be negatively correlated with culture-blaming and positively correlated with structure-blaming. The results of the study supported these hypotheses. Indeed, culture-blaming and structure-blaming accounted for a greater proportion of the variance in attitudes towards resource redistribution than any other outcome variable.

It comes as no surprise that structure-blaming attributions would be predictive of attitudes towards redistributive policy since resource allotment is one of the most fundamental ways of altering the opportunity and reward structure. It was equally unsurprising that, overall, participants viewed resource redistribution more negatively than all of the other school reform strategies. Within the resource redistribution subscale, participants favored the idea of having the federal government give Latino schools the funding they need. In fact, that item had the highest mean of any item across all of the ASRP subscales. The opposite was true of the items asking whether Latino schools should be given more money than White schools and whether people should be made to pay more taxes in order to fund Latino schools. Apparently, the participants liked the idea of promoting Latino success, but they did not like the idea of Latino students getting more than White students or having to pay to ensure equal performance. Breaking these results down by group, Whites and Latinos did not differ with respect to their opposition of a tax hike ($t(652)= .287$; $p= .774$), but Whites were less likely to favor giving Latino schools more money ($t(188.21)= 5.87$; $p< .01$).

These results are consistent with earlier research on the policy-implementation gap, and square with group-conflict theory, color-blind racism theory, and critical race theory. White acceptance of egalitarianism in principle, as expressed by their agreement with the plan to "give Latino schools the funding they need," allows them to portray a sense of color-blind neutrality and pro-academic ethos at the same time that they oppose the very measures that are needed in order to bring about egalitarian ends (e.g., Bracey, 1997). This inconsistency is protected by a basic "color-blind" principle, which stipulates that providing any racial group with a disproportionate amount of resources, regardless of need, is an act of (reverse) racism. This convenient admixture of ideas and principles promotes the interests of White people because it denies the possibility of equal outcomes while still keeping the individual White person protected from accusations of racism. It is precisely this method of using feigned race-neutrality to promote racial goals that color-blind racism theorists believe characterizes US race relations (Bonilla-Silva, 1996).

English-only

Attitudes towards English-only initiatives were expected to be positively related to culture-blaming and negatively correlated with structure-blaming. It is reasonable to imagine that people who blame schools for not being culturally inclusive would be in favor of teaching Spanish-speaking students to speak English, especially if they see the schools as resistant to change. But, the belief that students should not speak other languages because English is the "official language" of the US would be more consistent with a culture-blaming mindset than a structure-blaming one, and it is this group that was expected to most consistently endorse English-only initiatives.

The present study supported these hypotheses. The more a person preferred culture-blaming attributions, the more likely it was that they would also believe that English-only initiatives would be an appropriate remedy for Latino underachievement. In contrast, the more blame an individual put on the schools, the less likely it was that they would hold a favorable opinion of English-only mandates.

While these findings add to the credibility of the ASO-L, a qualification is in order. Only a small percentage of the variance in scores on the English-only measure was accounted for by the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits. Researchers desiring a more comprehensive understanding of the attributional underpinnings of English-only attitudes are encouraged to pursue additional research in this area.

Parent education

It was expected that parent education would be a divisive issue that would mark a clear divide between the two explanatory types. After all, believing that Latino parents need parenting classes assumes that they have a deficit, namely that they do not already know the course material. It also seems reasonable to expect that people who believe that the school is to blame for the Latino-White achievement gap would have a negative opinion about parent education classes because, to them, it is the school and not the parents that are in need of change.

Of these two hypotheses, only the first was supported. Whereas culture-blaming was positively related to attitudes towards parent education, the relationship between structure-blaming and attitudes towards parent education was statistically non-significant. The two variables together accounted for over 20 percent of the variance in parent

education scores and, consistent with theoretical expectations, culture-blaming was more strongly related to attitudes towards parent education classes than any of the other outcome variables. What remains unclear, however, is why people who believe that the causes for the Latino-White achievement gap lie in the schools would not opposed the underlying assumption of parental blame that comes with support for parent education. Because parent education continues to be trumpeted as a critical intervention by educators and school reform activists alike, it would be useful to acquire a more thorough understanding of this relationship through additional research.

Standardized testing

The accountability movement has gained a great deal of public attention as a result of George W. Bush's advocacy of NCLB. Theoretically, holding schools and school personnel accountable for students achieving a cut-off score on a high-stakes state-mandated test motivates them to do the best job possible of teaching children basic knowledge and skills. However, it is widely acknowledged that the problem with NCLB is that it does not go far enough in providing the resources schools need in order to serve predominately low-income and racial/ethnic minority students (Fusarelli, 2004). The penalties for having too many students fail the high-stakes test are stiff for teachers and principles, including the possibility of closing the school if the problem persists over several years. For their part, the students are punished for failing the test by being forced to repeat their current grade, even if doing so means waiting another year to graduate.

NCLB therefore uses standardized testing to wage war on both structural (i.e., schools and teachers) as well as cultural (i.e., students) sources of the achievement gap.

However, because NCLB does not afford Latino schools extra resources, it was expected that attitudes towards standardized testing would be positively associated with culture-blaming and negatively associated with structure-blaming. The results of this study support those hypotheses. However, it should be noted that less than 10 percent of the variance in attitudes towards standardized testing was accounted for by the two latent traits.

Finding support for the hypothesized relationships between culture-blaming and structure-blaming is an encouraging sign for the construct validity of the ASO-L, but the low proportion of variance accounted for by these traits means that there is more work to be done in understanding what goes into attitudes towards standardized testing. Perhaps the most significant problem with establishing relationships of this sort is the general lack of information people have with regards to the goals and function of high-stakes testing. That being said, the sample used in this study consisted almost exclusively of people who were recently in high school and were most likely subjected to standardized testing. If anyone should be aware of the pros and cons of the testing movement, it would be this group. A significant amount of additional research is necessary to determine whether standardized testing appeals more to a culture-blaming or a structure-blaming outlook among people who have not experienced it in its present form.

Additional avenues for education policy activism

Previous research on the relationship between attributions for social stratification and policy attitudes has shown that there is more to whether someone will endorse egalitarianism in practice than whether they believe in egalitarianism in principle

(Kluegel & E. R. Smith, 1986; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1985). Unfortunately, previous theories that have tried to explain the "principle-implementation gap" have portrayed a rather pessimistic outlook for change. Modern and symbolic racism theorists have argued that opposition to egalitarianism stems from a deeply ingrained dislike of Black people (Sears & Henry, 2005). In addition to having been attacked on theoretical grounds (e.g., Bobo, 1983), these theories lack a meaningful strategy for effecting change in large populations because "racism" is conceptualized as a matter of individual difference. Others, such as those in the laissez-faire (Bobo & R. Smith, 1998), realistic group conflict (Bobo, 2004), and color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b) camps, have highlighted the role of racial stereotypes and other legitimizing ideologies in justifying the racial order in the US. From their perspective, changing attitudes towards egalitarian policies would mean either undoing a legacy of racism in the US or redefining race as an unnecessary or illegitimate social marker. Neither of these strategies seems plausible.

Critical race theory offers a bit more hope. Like laissez-faire racism, realistic group-conflict, and color-blind racism theorists, critical race scholars believe that stereotyping serves a specific purpose in US society, namely to rationalize the comparatively worse treatment of racial/ethnic minorities (Bell, 1992). The difference between critical race theory and these other theories is that meaningful change can occur if the issue, policy, or law is framed properly. According to critical race theorists, race-based social change occurs when White people see the proposed conditions as being better for them than the current state of affairs. If the interests of White people do not converge with those of racial/ethnic minorities, nothing is likely to happen. On the other

hand, if they believe that they will benefit from the new way of doing things, they will make the necessary changes and then attribute the change to the willingness of White people to embrace civil rights (Delgado, 1996).

This is a difficult criterion to meet because it is usually *not* in the best interests of White people to afford racial/ethnic minorities a seat at their dinner table (Bell, 1992). What's more, the people who are in positions of power over the flow of public information have very little motivation to reframe issues in a way that will swing opposition towards egalitarianism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). On top of that, the current wave of color-blind racism makes individual-level activism even less likely by depicting race consciousness as being nearly as vile as good old-fashioned racial bigotry (Bonilla-Silva, 2002). As principled conservatism scholars have pointed out, racialized social policies, such as affirmative action, are widely viewed as racist because to many they imply either reverse discrimination or that racial/ethnic minorities are not capable of competing with Whites (Kuklinski, Sniderman, Knight, Piazza, Tetlock, Gordon, & Mellers, 1997).

The solution may lie in understanding how policies gain widespread public acceptance and then using that process to one's advantage. According to Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (2005), controversial social policies are often linked to a target group that is easily identified as being a threat to the moral majority. The targeted group, which until then had been largely ignored, is deemed to be deserving of public admonishment and sanction, both of which can be made official by the policy in question. Spokespersons for the policy, or "moral entrepreneurs," emerge as icons whom the public

can trust and who promise to right the "obvious" wrong. They use their influence to fan the flames of public anxiety, promising to restore order if only the public would agree to support the policy. Once the policy is passed, the groups that were intended to benefit do so, and the "evil" group that was thought to be causing the problems is allowed to vacate the public spotlight.

Co-opting this process by employing "color-blind" strategies may give egalitarian-minded school reformers a fighting chance. By portraying color-blindness as a moral issue, and by making explicit links between rival policies and racism, the activistic moral entrepreneur might be able to guilt the masses into rallying to the side of racial equality. In other words, by demonstrating that certain policies, such as standardized testing and English-only initiatives, are driven by a racist mindset, the moral entrepreneur might be able to motivate people to side with egalitarian school reform out of a fear of being labeled racist.

The present study provides some initial in-roads toward establishing these sorts of relationships. The ASO-L was built upon a body of research that conceptualizes culture-blaming as reflective of racial stereotyping and cultural-deficit thinking and structure-blaming as driven by the counter-hegemony of egalitarianism. It is important, then, that this study demonstrated that culture-blaming and structure-blaming, as measured by these items, are predictive of attitudes towards various forms of educational policy. As such, the study represents the kind of research that would be necessary in order to make a strong claim to the moral superiority of the structure-blaming attribution type and the policy preferences that go along with it. Clearly, additional research is required to fine

tune the ASO-L and to build a case for its construct validity, predictive validity, and generalizability. Once this is done, it will be up to activists to use data produced by the ASO-L to market policies that promote Latino achievement rather than perpetuate degrading stereotypes of Latino parents and culture.

Concurrently, Latino scholars and activists need to continue the arduous work of building a strengths-based counter-hegemony through the use of counter-narratives. LatCrit scholars such as Tara Yosso (2006) and Susan Auerbach (2002) have modeled this strategy by participating in and reporting on community activism. The counter-narratives that have come out of this work call attention to the ways Latinos use their culturally-informed assets to challenge the racist social structure. Because they are not deficit-based, LatCrit counter-narratives provide inspiration to Latino scholars while also helping White scholars become better aware of the ways in which Latino people, both inside and outside of the academy, resist oppression and marginalization (Delgado, 2000; Pizarro, 1999).

While it is a given that White people need to be part of the solution in terms of changing popular thinking about the Latino-White achievement gap because of the tremendous economic, social, and political power they hold, Latinos must continue to do their part or risk being completely dependent upon White radicals for their salvation. "Their part" includes, but is certainly not limited to, working towards defining a more racially inclusive ideological space in which Latino scholars, parents and students can reside (Macias, 2005). Furthermore, by telling and re-telling their racial stories, Latinos not only inspire each other, they also give progressive Whites an opportunity to rally

behind system-challenging explanations that make "common sense" in the same way that destructive ideologies have for years.

Racial/ethnic Differences in Attributional Preference

Invariance of the ASO-L

One of the more exciting discoveries was that the ASO-L was shown to be partially scalar invariant, which means that it can be used with both Latino and White populations. It is important to avoid over-interpreting this finding, however. The observation-to-estimate ratio was relaxed in order to test for differences in latent means, so it is likely that the estimates may be somewhat unstable. Furthermore, the qualification that the scale was "partially" invariant needs to be appreciated. In particular, the item "White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students" appeared to function differently for Latinos than for Whites. At the same time, it should be recalled that the standard used to determine that the item functioned differently across groups was a rather conservative one ($\alpha = .05$; observed $p = .04$). Given that chi-square is affected by large sample sizes, and that the change in chi-square resulted in a *p*-value greater than .01, it is possible that the item may function similarly for both Latino and White populations. More research involving a larger and more representative sample of Latinos is necessary in order to cross-validate this property.

Structure-blaming

In terms of both latent and observed means, Latinos and Whites differed in the extent to which they endorsed structure-blaming attributions. These results were anticipated since White people benefit from their privileged position in the racial

hierarchy. Challenging the fairness of the schooling system reduces the perceived merit of the group's success because it calls attention to the fact that Whites and Latinos do not compete on unequal footing. Agreement with structure-blaming attributions therefore diminishes the positive affiliative value associated with being part of the "winning team."

Opposition to structure-blaming attributions is also consistent with the dominant racial ideology of color-blindness. Seeing racism as the sum total of individual acts of overt bigotry limits what "counts" as meaningful discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b). The only forms of racism that a color-blind racist would be attuned to would be racist slurs, jokes, and other race-based derogatory language. When these sorts of obvious transgressions are absent, racism is thought to be non-existent.

Half of the items in the structure-blaming subscale address issues of unfairness that have little to do with the individual volition of school personnel, and this may explain why Whites and Latinos were not more different than they were on the structure-blaming trait. Decisions regarding whether Latino students have a fair share of resources, are forced to attend classes that are too large, and are asked to study curriculum that under-values their culture are not made by individual teachers and counselors. They are by-products of a "raceless" school system that puts White students in a better position to succeed as compared to their Latino counterparts. White people may be more likely to agree with these sorts of attributions because they do not necessarily portray the White race in a negative light. If, on the other hand, all of the items had concentrated on acts of racial discrimination committed by specific White people, the gap between Whites and Latinos may have been larger.

Support for this hypothesis comes from a follow-up *t*-test on the item "Latino students are more likely to face racial discrimination than are White students." The item was not included in final version of the scale, but it does offer a glimpse into the willingness of Latinos and Whites to identify specific racist acts as a cause for differential achievement. Although White participants indicated a preference for this attribution overall, the magnitude of the their preference was statistically significantly lower than that of Latinos ($t(208.34)= 3.23$; $p< .01$). The item also had one of the lowest means overall among White participants indicating a general reluctance to believe that overt acts of racism have much to do with the attenuated performance of Latino students. In their minds, racial discrimination is mostly a thing of the past, so the few acts of bigotry that a Latino student might encounter should not have a lasting impact on their performance.

Future research in this area could more closely examine whether Whites are more likely to cite structural causes that are governed by what they perceive to be a raceless social structure than those that pin the responsibility for discrimination on individual White people. In addition, it would useful to know whether this same trend would hold if the more abstract, distal causes were phrased in such a way as to imply racial intentionality. So, for example, would White people be more willing to attribute the Latino-White achievement gap to a discrepancy in school resources if they were told that the differences were due to economic competition between racial/ethnic groups or if no mention of racial competition was made?

Culture-blaming

The similarity in preference for culture-blaming attributions between Latinos and Whites was an unanticipated finding. White participants were expected to endorse culture-blaming attributions at a higher rate than Latinos for several of the same reasons that they were expected to reject structure-blaming attributions, such as the hedonic bias, positive group affiliative value, and feigned color-blindness. The fundamental attribution error and just-world belief were also expected to influence Whites' responses since culture-blaming is considered to be the less complex attribution type and heuristics such as these facilitate cognitive processing, particularly when there is little motivation to think very hard about a topic.

For their part, Latinos were expected to have a less positive view of attributions that place blame on their own cultural shortcomings. As "actors," Latinos were also expected to be less likely to fall prey to the fundamental attribution error because they should be more aware of the powerful situational constraints that make the opportunity and reward structure different for White and Latino students. Finally, because the achievement gap is more personally relevant to them as an underdog than it is to more advantaged Whites, they were expected to be more motivated to think deeply about the matter, and therefore less likely to rely on cognitive heuristics that might otherwise make them susceptible to culture-blaming. That Latinos and Whites had equal levels of the culture-blaming trait runs counter to all of these arguments.

In considering possible explanations for this finding, it is instructive to note that Latinos favored attributions that identified specific parenting defects to the more general

belief that “Latinos don’t value education.” In fact, the two least favored items in the culture-blaming subscale were “Latino parents don’t value education as much as White parents” and “Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family.” The two most preferred items were “Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students” and “Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior.” This may indicate a belief among Latinos that Latino parents want their children to be successful in school, but that they either do not know how or choose not to act in ways that advance that goal.

Another factor to consider in interpreting these findings is that Latinos, like all racial/ethnic groups, exist within the present day ideological domain. They are exposed to messages pushing the importance of personal responsibility, meritocracy, and individualism just as Whites are. To expect that they would have the sophistication to push these messages aside in favor of a more complex understanding of the schooling process may be asking more than can reasonably be expected of any marginalized racial/ethnic group.

Moreover, Latino college students, like most college students, usually do not attend primary and secondary schools that promote, or even accept, allegiance to the structure-blaming point of view. As many critics have noted, schools are very controlling institutions that have as one of their main goals the transmission of dominant ideologies (Apple, 1990; 1991; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Ferguson, 2001; Kohl, 1991; McNeill, 1986; Pine & Hilliard, 1990). This is accomplished by specifying which curricula will be

taught, mandating the use of pedagogies and methods of evaluation that focus on individual effort and achievement, and quashing collective student action that disagrees with school rules.

According to these theorists, students who graduated from the K-12 system did so because they learned how to function successfully within an ideologically hostile environment. They internalized the messages being taught to them by the school and reconstructed their schemata to reduce the cognitive dissonance between what they previously thought was true about the world and what they had to believe in order to do well in school. It was within this sort of environment that many Latinos who are now in college learned how to survive academically.

One might argue that since the poor were in the minority in the sample, these effects would be less severe. And, in fact, a full 80 percent of the Latinos self-identified as coming from families that were of either middle or upper-middle class. But just because they may have been fortunate enough to attend wealthier and perhaps less ideologically hostile schools does not mean that they are without their own set of biases. Intra-racial feuding is not unheard of in the Latino community (see Blea, 1988; Camarillo, 1996; Richardson, 1999). Wealthier and more assimilated Latinos are often chastised for being *vendidos* by poorer Latinos who in turn are criticized for being trapped in an antiquated culture that promises little beyond generational poverty. Backed by the power that comes with wealth, as well as the support of a White majority that has a vested interest in perpetuating culture-blaming attributions for social stratification, upper-class Latinos usually have their side validated by mainstream society.

Most of the undergraduate Latinos in the present study were of this wealthier class. Furthermore, having entered into an exclusive university community, the Latino participants may have come to the conclusion that their racial/ethnic identification could be traded up for a more socially rewarding academic or class identity. In doing so, they may have had to adopt some of the same attributional tendencies as their White peers in order to fit in. Within this context, blaming non-collegiate Latinos for their apparent ineptitude accentuates the fact that they are the "good Latinos" who "made it." To the extent that they liberated themselves from a strong racial/ethnic identity and surrounded themselves with peers who support that decision, there is little psychic cost for choosing that route.

All of this takes place within a national ideological context that holds Latinos in a one-down position relative to Whites, so it is important to refrain from judging Latinos, either wealthy or poor, too harshly. Power and status differences that demarcate place in US society can lead to "false consciousness" (Jost, 1995) or "internalized inferiority" (Freire, 1970) whereby the oppressed rally behind the ideas and interests of more status-privileged groups, even when it is not in their own personal or collective best interest to do so. Jost (1995) has pointed out racial/ethnic minorities who have a false consciousness deny that structural discrimination still exists and wrongly blame members of their own racial/ethnic group for social stratification. How they do this is dictated by the dominant racial ideology of the day, which in modern times means denying that race plays a part in determining the opportunities or rewards a person is likely to receive (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a).

A recent study by Neville, Coleman, Falconer, and D. Holmes (2005) speaks to this issue. The authors found that Black college students who espoused color-blindness were more likely to harbor negative stereotypes about Black people, to blame Blacks for their own economic misfortunes, and to believe that extant social hierarchies are based on the superiority of some social groups over others. While the focal group in their study was Blacks rather than Latinos, their general logic would suggest that the participants in the present study may have been affected by the racial ideology of color-blindness, as well as depressed levels of racial identity. Additional research is required to determine whether preferences for culture-blaming and structure-blaming attributions among Latinos are predictable by levels of false consciousness, and whether this relationship varies by socioeconomic status. In order to accomplish this task, it will be necessary to administer the ASO-L to Latinos across levels of education and social class rather than to college students exclusively.

Concluding Remarks

This study was an attempt to show that the way people explain the Latino-White achievement gap is influenced by the amount of the culture-blaming and structure-blaming traits they possess. For this to be true, the attributional stimulus (i.e., the Latino-White achievement gap) must be seen as important enough to warrant an explanation. The results of the 2004 Gallup poll (Rose & Gallup, 2004), which indicated that people generally think of the differential achievement of Whites and racial/ethnic minority students as an important educational issue, provided the necessary rationale. In turn, the Gallup Poll was supported by the results of the present study, which showed that people

do indeed have ideas about the causes of the Latino-White achievement gap and that their reasoning is driven by at least two latent traits, which I have called culture-blaming and structure-blaming.

Evidence of construct validity was achieved by demonstrating that scores from the ASO-L could be used to predict attitudes towards resource redistribution, English-only initiatives, parent education, and standardized testing. Although the proportion of variance in school reform attitudes that was explained by culture-blaming and structure-blaming was relatively low overall, the fact that the traits were statistically significantly related to the outcome variables in the expected direction provides some evidence that the ASO-L is capable of measuring what it is intended to measure.

Furthermore, consistent with expectations, White participants had higher scores than Latino participants on the structure-blaming trait. What was unexpected, however, was that Latinos and Whites did not differ in levels of the culture-blaming trait. Three explanations were advanced to explain this outcome. The first is that the scale is not functioning properly, and clearly more research investigating its psychometric properties is in order. The second explanation is that the results were an artifact of the sample. Had less educated and less wealthy Latinos been included in the sample, group differences in preference for culture-blaming attributions may have been detectable. A third explanation raised the possibility that Latinos as a group have developed a false consciousness in which they endorse explanations for the Latino-White achievement gap even though it is not in their best interests to do so. Again, more research is required to achieve a more complete and accurate assessment of this rationale.

The application of attribution theory towards understanding policy attitudes represents a promising area for research and academic activism. Hopefully, the ASO-L will prove useful in advancing both agendas. Educators and policymakers are fighting an uphill battle in their crusade to halt misguided school reform. Their goal of realizing an equitable opportunity and reward structure that befits racial/ethnic minorities and Whites alike will not be achieved without a fight. But, as many have noted before me, there are few struggles that are nobler or more necessary.

Appendix A

Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (pilot)

Causes for the Latino-White Achievement Gap

Many studies have shown that Latino students do not do as well in school as White students. This is true all the way from kindergarten through high school, and it can be seen in lower standardized test scores, higher rates of grade failure, and lower graduation rates among Latino students. While it is true that many Latino students do quite well in school, I am interested in why you think Latino students *on average* do worse in school than White students. For each cause listed below, please indicate how important you feel it is in explaining why Latino students do worse on average than White students. Please remember that even the experts do not agree on which of the causes are the most important. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. Just answer what you believe to be true.

1. Latino culture does not place as much emphasis on getting a good education as White culture does.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

2. Latino students have a greater chance than White students of getting bad teachers.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

3. White students think about their future more than Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

4. The schools that Latino students attend are not as good as the schools White students attend.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

5. White students tend to be born with higher intelligence than Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

6. Latino students are less likely to take responsibility for their education than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

7. Latino students are less capable than White students of doing well in school due to genetic reasons.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

8. White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

9. Teachers don't expect as much out of Latino students as they expect out of White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

10. Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

11. White teachers don't do as a good of a job teaching Latino children as they do teaching White children.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

12. Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

13. Many school counselors don't have the best interests of Latino students in mind.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

14. Latino students are placed in lower tracks more often than White students are.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

15. The school curriculum tends to show more positive images of White students than of Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

16. Schools with mostly Latino students tend to have fewer resources than schools with mostly White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

17. There is more of an emphasis on teaching to the test in schools with mostly Latino students than in schools with mostly White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

18. White parents do a better job than Latino parents of emphasizing to their children that you have to work hard to get good grades.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

19. Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

20. Schools with mostly White students tend to have better technology than schools with mostly Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

21. The way schools are run reflects White culture more than Latino culture.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

22. Latino students think it's "uncool" to do well in school.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

23. Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

24. White students are more likely than Latino students to inherit the genes for doing well in school.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

25. That Latino students do not do as well as White students is evidence that the school system practices racial discrimination.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

26. Latino students have problems that the school is not equipped to deal with.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

How do you self-identify racially/ethnically? (Check as many as apply).

_____ Black/African-American
_____ Asian/Asian-American
_____ White/Anglo-American/European American
_____ Hispanic/Latino(a)
_____ Native American/American Indian

If you self-identify racially/ethnically in a way that is not listed above, please list that identity here:

_____

Gender:

_____ Female
_____ Male

Think about when you were in high school, how would you describe your family's living situation financially:

_____ Lower Class
_____ Working Class
_____ Middle Class
_____ Upper Middle Class
_____ Upper Class
_____ I don't know/I choose not to respond

What is your class status?

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Other
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Attributions for Scholastic Outcomes Scale—Latino (full)

Causes for the Latino-White Achievement Gap

Instructions:

Please indicate how important you feel each of the following causes is in explaining why Latino students do worse in school *on average* than White students by circling the number that corresponds to your choice. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Latino students have a greater chance than White students of getting bad teachers.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

2. The school curriculum tends to show more positive images of White students than of Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

3. Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

4. The schools that Latino students attend are not as good as the schools White students attend.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

5. Latino students are less likely to take responsibility for their education than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

6. Schools with mostly White students tend to have better technology than schools with mostly Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

7. White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

8. Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

9. Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

10. Schools with mostly Latino students tend to have fewer resources than schools with mostly White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

11. Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

12. White parents do a better job than Latino parents of emphasizing to their children that you have to work hard to get good grades.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

13. Latino students choose to speak Spanish rather than learning the language of the school.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

14. Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

15. Schools just can't overcome all of the problems Latino students have in their homes.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

16. Latino students are more likely to face racial discrimination than are White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

17. It is hard for teachers to reach Latino children.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

18. School counselors do not understand the needs of Latino students as much they understand the needs of White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

19. Teachers are more likely to underestimate the potential of their Latino students than they are to underestimate the potential of their White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

20. Latino students come to school so far behind that it is hard for schools to help them catch up to where White students of their same age are.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D

Attributional Complexity Scale

Person Perception Questionnaire

Instructions

This questionnaire has been designed to investigate the different ways that people think about themselves and other people.

The questionnaire is ANONYMOUS so there is no need to put your name on it.

There are no RIGHT or WRONG answers. We are interested in your own PERCEPTIONS.

Please answer each question as HONESTLY and ACCURATELY as you can, but don't spend too much time thinking about each answer.

Scoring Procedure

The numbers on each scale represent the following degrees of agreement:

1	=	very untrue/inaccurate
2	=	moderately untrue/inaccurate
3	=	slightly untrue/inaccurate
4	=	neither true not untrue, accurate nor inaccurate
5	=	slightly true/accurate
6	=	moderately true/accurate
7	=	very true/accurate

Read each statement carefully and show your agreement or disagreement by circling ONE NUMBER on each scale.

1. I usually like to try to analyze and explain people's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

2. I usually try to figure out many different causes for a person's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

3. I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking processes.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

4. I think a lot about the influence that I have on other people's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

5. I have found that the relationships between a person's attitudes, beliefs, habits and character traits are seldom simple and straight forward.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

6. If I see people behaving in a really strange or peculiar manner I usually attempt to understand the underlying causes of their behaviors, rather than just put it down to the fact that they are strange people.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

7. I have thought a lot about the family background and personal history of people who are close to me, in order to understand why they are the sort of people they are.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

8. I really enjoy analyzing the reasons and causes for people's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

9. I usually find that complicated explanations for people's behavior are helpful rather than confusing.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

10. I give much thought to how my own thinking works in the process of understanding or explaining people's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

11. I quite often think about the influence that other people have on my behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

12. I have thought a lot about the way that different parts of my personality influence other parts, (e.g. beliefs affecting attitudes or attitudes affecting other character traits.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

13. I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

14. When I analyze a person's behavior I often find that the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

15. I enjoy getting into discussions where the causes for people's behavior are being talked over.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

16. I have found that the causes for people's behavior are usually complex rather than simple.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

17. I am very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

18. I often think about the different ways that people influence each other.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

19. To understand a person's personality/behavior I have found it is important to know how that person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits fit together.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

20. When I try to explain other people's behavior I usually consider all the outside circumstances that might be affecting them.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

21. I have often found that the basic cause for a person's behavior is located far back in time.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

22. I am very curious about human behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

23. I prefer complex rather than simple explanations for people's behavior.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

24. When the reasons I give for my own behavior are different from someone else's, this often makes me think about the thinking processes that lead to my explanations.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

25. I believe that to understand a person you need to understand the people who that person has close contact with.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

26. I seldom take people's behavior at face value. I usually worry about the inner causes for their behavior, (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, etc.).

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

27. I think a lot about the influences that society has on my behavior and personality.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

28. I have thought very much about my own family background and personal history in order to understand why I am the sort of person I am.

very untrue or inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very true or accurate

Appendix E

SOCIAL ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Below are statements on a variety of social problems about which we all have beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. We all think differently about such matters, and this scale is an attempt to let you express your beliefs and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond to each item by circling the number that corresponds to your view on each item, as follows:

1 = very strongly disagree
2 = strongly disagree
3 = disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree
6 = very strongly agree

		very strongly disagree	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	very strongly agree
1.	social stability	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	feeling	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	discipline	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	government price control	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	freedom	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	business	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	authority	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	faith in God	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	free abortion	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	obedience of children	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	collective bargaining	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	socialized medicine	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	law and order	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	racial equality	1	2	3	4	5	6

		very strongly disagree	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	very strongly agree
15.	private property	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	capitalism	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	social status	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	social change	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.	moral standards	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	patriotism	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	equality	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	social planning	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	free enterprise	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.	civil rights	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	religion	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.	children's interests	1	2	3	4	5	6
27.	labor unions	1	2	3	4	5	6
28.	equality of women	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix F

Attributions for School Reform Policies Scale

How to Close the Latino-White Achievement Gap

Instructions:

There are many different ways that have been proposed for closing the achievement gap between African-American and White students. Some of those ways are listed below. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the number that corresponds to your choice. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Offering Latino students the opportunity to prepare for a trade would motivate them more than most traditional courses do.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The state should spend as much money as it takes to make sure that Latino students achieve equally with White students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Schools have a responsibility to make sure that students speak English at all times during the school day.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. Teaching Latino parents how to care for their children would prevent many of the problems Latino students have today.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. Counselors should take into consideration that Latino students lose confidence when they are put in classes that are too hard for them.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Speaking Spanish is a sign that a Latino student is rebelling against school policy.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Standardized testing makes sure that Latino students are learning *at the same pace* as White students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. Latino students will not achieve equally with Whites until they learn to speak English properly.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. Standardized testing makes sure that Latino students are learning *the same material* as White students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. Parenting classes should be offered to Latino parents to teach them how to support the educational goals of the school.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. The best to way to achieve equal outcomes is to increase the funding for schools that serve mainly Latino students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. Latino students would benefit from being put in classes that match their ability.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. Schools that serve mostly Latino students should be given more money than schools that serve mostly White students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. Closing the gap between Latino students and White students requires making both groups achieve the same standardized test score in order to pass to the next grade.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. Parenting classes would bring Latino parents up to par with White parents in terms of taking an interest in how their child is doing at school.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. Schools need to do a better job of tracking Latino students into vocational classes so that they will see how their coursework applies to their future career.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. Latino students should be forced to speak English so that they can understand what the teacher is trying to tell them.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. Holding students to high standards on standardized tests motivates teachers to do a better job of teaching all students.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

19. The government needs to give schools that serve Latino students the funding they need.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. Parenting classes would help Latino parents realize that they need to get involved with their child's education

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. People should pay more taxes to make sure that schools that serve mainly Latino students have the resources they need.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. Making sure that Latino students learn alongside other students of similar ability would help improve heir performance.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. Latino parents stand to benefit from classes designed to teach them how much schooling matters in today's society.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. Schools could help Latinos quite a bit by making sure they only speak English in class.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

25. Raising the cut-off score that all students are required to get in order to pass to the next grade would motivate Latino students to do better.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix G

Final Version of the ASO-L

Causes for the Latino-White Achievement Gap

Instructions:

Please indicate how important you feel each of the following causes is in explaining why Latino students do worse in school *on average* than White students by circling the number that corresponds to your choice. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

1. The school curriculum tends to show more positive images of White students than of Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

2. Latino students do not grow up with as stimulating of a home environment as White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

3. Latino students are less likely to take responsibility for their education than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

4. White students usually get placed in more challenging classes than Latino students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

5. Latino parents don't value education as much as White parents.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

6. Latino students get the message at home that school is not as important as family.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

7. Schools with mostly Latino students tend to have fewer resources than schools with mostly White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

8. Latino students tend to be in larger classes than White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

9. White parents do a better job than Latino parents of emphasizing to their children that you have to work hard to get good grades.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

10. Latino students are not as likely as White students to have someone in the family who role models good academic behavior.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

11. School counselors do not understand the needs of Latino students as much they understand the needs of White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

12. Teachers are more likely to underestimate the potential of their Latino students than they are to underestimate the potential of their White students.

Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5

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